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Mandlebaums

Interview by Esther Wurley

Absolute Underground: Let's talk about your name. Out of all the subjects to be drawn from Seinfeld, why this?

BS: Bob Sakamano here - the band's manager and lifestyle coach. The band (Dilly, Ritchie, Greggy and Justy) comes from a pedigree of world class crepe rollers. They put the magic in Magic Pan™! They use their family name mostly because all the other good names have been taken but also because it sounds good when it's chanted by a crowd of adoring fans.

AU: Any specific episodes you enjoy referencing in your songs? Or are they all about nothing?

BS: They say the songs are about nothing, but I find great depth and meaning in every word plagiarized from the storylines. A personal favourite of mine is "Fancy Boy" from the reverse peephole episode where Dilly sings: "Want me, love me, shower me with kisses, I'm a fancy boy." He sings it with such conviction.

AU: You guys seem to spend a lot of time in the studio. What can we expect in terms of releases in the next while? What's already available?

BS: You're telling me! I have to foot the bill every time they go in the damn studio! About a year ago they went in and recorded a full album but abandoned the project just as it was about to be released. Don't ask me why. Thankfully they've re-recorded everything, plus a few extras, just recently and it's sounding bigger and better than ever. That'll come out in the next year or three. Their first full length *Take it up a Notch!* and *Vincent's Picks* are free via Sakamano Records at mandlebaums.bandcamp.com. They've also got a song coming out on a *This Is Pop!* compilation LP, but I'm still negotiating with Ben Disaster for a better licensing deal.

AU: Do you guys actively celebrate festivus? If so, who airs the most grievances against whom?

BS: Every day is Festivus – it's a state of mind. Ritchie's never happy with anything and we hear about it all the time. We're already not decorating our pole for this year's third annual Festivus celebration!

AU: What are your top five local bands right now?

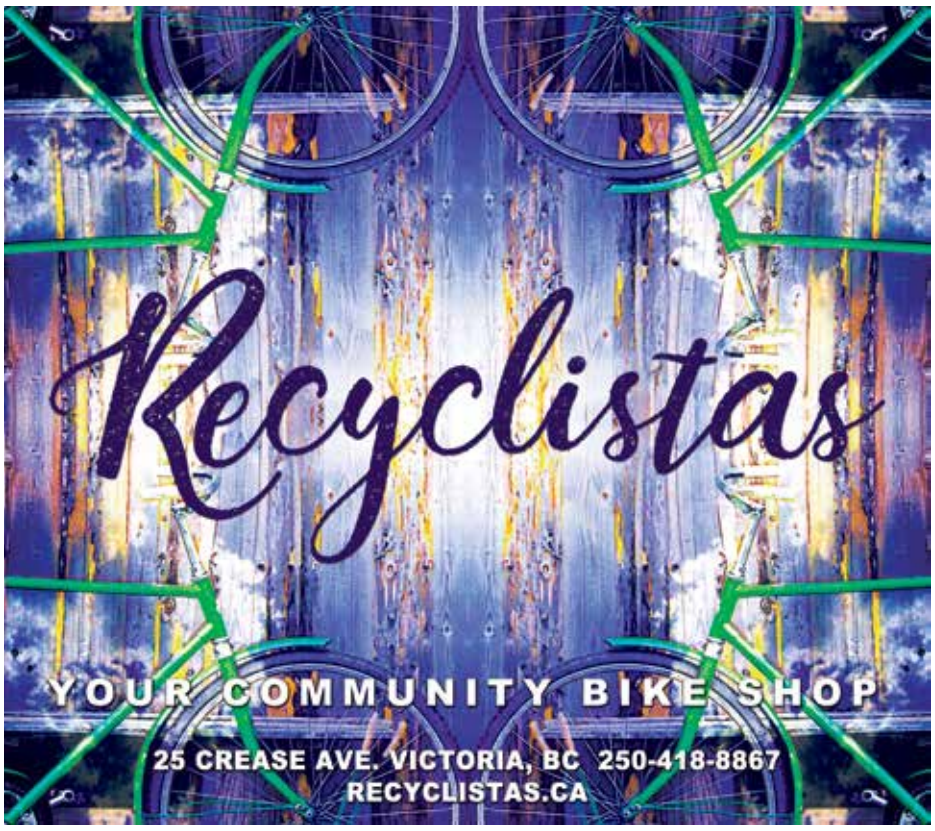
BS: After The Mandlebaums, of course, Richie and The Cool Jerks, Crom Dam, Vic City Rebels, and any one of the 27 bands Jono Jak is in.

AU: Is anybody here a marine biologist?

BS: I doubt it, but thanks for asking!

www.facebook.com/mandlebaums/

PHOTO SOURCE: Bob Sakamano



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Drown in Ashes

VANCOUVER VENGEANCE

Interview by Roger the Shrubber

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

Drown In Ashes: Hey *Absolute Underground*, this is Valek, Owen and Jay of Drown In Ashes. As a three-piece we pride ourselves on the intensity of our live shows. A number of times people have come up to us after a show, blown away and/or surprised by our energy. As a three piece we need to bring it to both the writing as well as our live performance. All three of us are at the forefront with nothing to hide behind.

AU: Give us a brief history of Drown in Ashes, how did you form and what are you all about?

DIA: Drown in Ashes started in 2015 with Jay and the original guitar player Ryan Lundgren. Jay and Ryan did a bunch of writing/recording before going on hiatus for 18 months, getting back together in late 2016 to finish, and release, the *Social Collapse* EP on January 1st 2017. Enter Owen on drums. After a couple shows in 2017 Ryan left DIA and we found Valek to take over the guitar shredding duties in August 2017. With this creative and committed line up we have been able to accomplish a lot of things (including this article) in a relatively short period of time; playing our first show with the current line up in November, opening for SECT. Since then, we have played shows in BC and Alberta; we are having a great time sharing the stage with so many killer metal and hardcore bands. We are all about momentum and putting our all into achieving as much as we can with the band. We also have a DIY ethos in regards to merchandise and (when possible) setting up and self promoting shows. We are stoked to be getting out what we are putting into this, thus far.

AU: Can you describe your sound for those of us who've never heard you?

DIA: We all bring different influences to the table, which translates into us sounding like an orphanage on fire and the children can't escape because two drunks are having sex in the fire escape. Depending on who you ask, we have been called metal, hardcore, metallic hardcore and even punk. We have songs that are fast and unrelenting, as well as songs that are slow and groove based, but right from the start we have identified ourselves as the Beatles, if Ringo played every instrument, let's go with that.

AU: You're releasing a new album soon, is that right? What can you tell us about it? Does it explore any particular themes or topics lyrically?

DIA: Yes, we have our second EP *Ruination* coming out in September on Haunted Records out of Indianapolis. *Ruination* is a five-song record that we recorded with Matt Roach at Rain City Recorders in Vancouver. It is a heavy and dark record for sure! The term ruination refers to ruining someone or something or being ruined; which is very representative of the songs on the EP. The EP explores themes such as neglect, isolation, mental health, addiction/recovery, trauma, self loathing, depression, oppression and change. We hope that the lyrics (and music) resonate with the listener. We are working with Journeyman Productions for our EP release show at Pub 340, in Vancouver, on September 28th. We will be joined by Wraiths, Death Preacher and Arrow in the Quiver.

AU: You have a couple out-of-town shows booked already, will you be touring more extensively this year, and if so, where will you be going?

DIA: It has been a really busy and productive year for us thus far. We are stoked to be back in Alberta in late July, and will be in Kelowna (September 29th) and Maple Ridge (October 5th) to support the release. We are currently looking ahead to 2019.

AU: What else does the next year have in store for you guys? Any goals you're hoping to accomplish?

DIA: The plan is to keep moving forward and keep writing/performing. We are currently filming a couple videos with Andy Kidd here in Vancouver and we plan to keep reaching new people through various formats. We have been talking a lot about getting onto a few festivals next year and will be planning a tour, that will be in the works soon.

AU: What is your band philosophy when it comes to both writing and performing?

DIA: Our sound is based in collaborating our various influences to create our heavy sound. The music is a team effort and Jay writes the words. We have an iterative writing style; the music starts from a simple point and we continually build on it, adding layers of complexity until we feel we have something that is not only novel but is the best possible representation of what each song could have been. We leave nothing on the table. The same applies to our on-stage philosophy. Performing is about going all out and engaging with the crowd. We are a heavy band and most people are there for the music, so that's what we focus on and deliver. Again, as a three piece we need to bring it, with brutality and integrity, every time.

AU: What are your hopes for the future of this band?

DIA: We hope to eventually form a covenant with Satan and secure a long running tenure on the stage in Vegas, the two pinnacles for any metal band. We want to keep writing good music, play great shows, meet great people, and get the most out of DIA. Being in this band provides us the chance to keep learning. Its about trying/doing new/different things, and take a few risks along the way.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

DIA: Whatever you do in your life, do it with all you got! The world is becoming a scary and unpredictable place; make your mark and show your support to others who are trying to do the same. Looking forward to meeting some of you down the road at one of our shows. Keep it heavy!

drownxinxashes.bandcamp.com/

PHOTO CREDIT: Nathan Somes

Kobra and the Lotus

Interview by Apryl Fawn

Absolute Underground: *Prevail II*, your fifth studio album, was released April 27, near the beginning of your spring 2018 American tour. Have you already incorporated the newly-released tracks into your live performance? What has been the initial response to the second installment of *Prevail*? You must be excited to play these songs for the first time overseas on your seven upcoming dates in Europe, where there is such fervor and enthusiasm for bands of your genre. Thoughts?

Kobra Paige: We have indeed, and it's been so fun! Currently we've only been performing a set list of songs exclusively off of *Prevail I* and *Prevail II*. We've been humbled to receive another great response in general from this new release. *Prevail I* and *II* have become the most well-known music repertoire by us as a general consensus within our fan base now, which shows us that it has brought us to and reached many new people. We've just completed an eight-week American tour where we shared the brand-new album and the response was very positive. I can't wait to see what our friends think in Europe. I'm very excited!

AU: Who created the cover art for these albums? Is there a correlation between the mandala and the concept you had in mind for *Prevail*?

KP: The cover art for *Prevail II* was originally created by Norwegian artist, Dino Tomic. He created all four mandalas that are featured on the front and backs of each of the *Prevail* albums. The newest album was collaborated on by Canadian graphic designer, Eric Dietrich. The original *Prevail II* mandala was black and white. Colours were layered with inscriptions into the mandala later on for its final form.

The mandala represents a human life in its complex and full form. You have *Prevail I* representing the birth and purest form of a human at the beginning. Then it's followed with *Prevail II* where the darkness has crept its way in to the true nature of the human being, yet the fire and yearning to rise above the ego still shines bright. In this second album art, the human has gone through some "life." It has adapted stories and has had shaping experiences, perhaps leaving deep rooted scars, yet the humanity is still there when you're taking a closer look.

AU: Heavy. We also loved your spin on Fleetwood Mac's 1997 song 'The Chain.' The fuller and more operatic sound created heightened intensity and emotion for the listener. Can you explain the significance (if any) of the video idea to us? Where was it filmed?

KP: Thank you! Absolutely. This was supposed to be a powerful closer for the *Prevail* chapter. I'm a big fan of Fleetwood Mac and even though this was not the original message of the song, I found great empowerment for humanity in specifically the three lines, "You must never break the chain," "chain keep us together," and "running through the shadows." I turned it into a message of unity and strength. This was filmed in Belgrade, Serbia and its purpose was to remind people of how music is a universal language meant to bring people together. Unity also meaning diminishing judgement. *Prevail I* and *II* really highlight the self-reflection of judgement and how if we do it to ourselves or anyone else then we can understand how others are judging. That can diffuse a separation between people. We aren't so different after all.

AU: Kobra, you've often been compared to other (female) hard rock/metal artists like Simone Simons and Cristina Scabbia. Is this a niche that you as a front-woman have aspired to fit into from early on in your music career? Will we someday hear Kobra branch into other vocal styles; maybe in the direction of female-fronted death metal bands like Arch Enemy?

KP: This is a very interesting question. I'm humbled and feel very flattered whenever I'm kept in mind beside other people's favourite artists. It's not for me to decide how people hear us or where they place us in their mind. I'm just grateful to have them enjoy us as well. Those are two very talented women with completely different bodies of musical art and presentation and that's how I look at music. In truth, I have never ever aspired to fit into a niche and I don't personally believe that KATL fits in a specific metal or rock niche. The more we write, the more I'm very much trying to break some of the stereotypes that we've been placed into. For example, we are often placed by people as symphonic, operatic, female fronted metal because of my vibrato, however I don't consider myself an operatic singer and though our music sometimes has symphonic elements, it isn't a defining feature you can consistently find throughout our albums. I would hope Kobra and the Lotus brings to the table its own unique sound with my own unique voice, just as those other ladies do and all the male fronted bands as well.

That second question is also interesting because in my mind I have already began exploring quite a lot of other vocal styles in our recent works especially. There are more tonalities, use of range, different use of breathiness and weight, and vocal noises/layers that have not been expressed before. I very much respect growling. I find it to be quite intriguing, however it's not something I've personally ever been interested in pursuing for myself.

AU: Thomas Caser, managing director of Napalm Records, said that Kobra and the Lotus was "one of the most exciting new bands in this (hard rock) genre." How did it feel to sign with them back in 2016? Other than your history with power-metal band, Kamelot, have you collaborated with any other bands under Napalm?

KP: It was wonderful! I have to say, they've been a great team and we couldn't have chosen anyone better. They're full of ambition, passion, and youthful energy. I really respect and align with that. I've never collaborated with anyone yet! You never know what the future will hold though! I'd love to do something with Myles Kennedy.

AU: Since you got your start back in 2009, there has been a notable metamorphosis in band members. How did the current lineup impact the culmination of the final product on this particular record? Did you all share the same vision for *Prevail* and *Prevail II*, or is it a tale of your (Kobra's) personal journey?

KP: It has certainly been quite a journey but I have to say it's made me a firm believer in everything happening the way it is supposed to happen. Nothing would be the same if any variables were different. Working in the studio all together in one place was magical. There are many creative minds here and it wouldn't be the same without all of them. I can't wait to start writing and creating our sixth album. We now have Ronny Gutierrez onboard. He's the first permanent guitarist we've had since 2012 that will stay beside Jasio. He's wonderful and clicked right into the family. The sixth album will be another organically written and collaborative experience by us.

'Light Me Up' is the only collaborative lyrical content in the *Prevail* series and that's because there was a beautiful and important message that a few of us very much aligned on sharing. Otherwise the content was largely based off my personal journey and what qualities I saw reflecting in myself and all the people that surround me. It was meant to be a highly relatable and honest album. I find my greatest purpose and joy within music through using it to connect people. I want our songs to inspire and empower people to let the best pieces of themselves shine through and shed light on matters that I don't think receive enough thought or attention. That's always going to be my priority and intention within music.

AU: And lastly we're told the production of this record was crowdfunded via the website, PledgeMusic. Is there anything you'd like to say to your fans who contributed?

KA: Yes, always! THANK YOU SO MUCH! You're amazing and keep our light shining strong. I'm constantly inspired and moved by the way people support us and believe in us. Sometimes, if we're really lucky, people will share their personal stories and how they relate to some of the songs. That has been a great and humbling gift to receive. These pledgers are also reasons for us to continue fighting for our place in music. It's been a hard mountain to climb that can sometimes feel endless. These things restore faith. Thank you.

http://kobraandthelotus.com/
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North Hammer

Interview by Roger the Shrubber

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

Andrew James: This is Andrew James, guitarist/ vocalist of North Hammer. I'm better known for playing bass in Eye of Horus but other than that, I'd probably say it is for always wearing one black and one white sock. Edgy, I know…

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who are you and how did you form?

AJ: It started as a post-high school band, everyone else went on to do other bands and I ended up using it as a vessel to practice writing music. Eventually the songs became good enough to put on a record. As the recording went on I enlisted my friend Doug from Shotgunner to record the drums for me, and I finished the rest of the recording. As a live line-up, we are still currently 'forming' I guess you would say, but that won't stop me from making more records!

AU: Can you describe your music for us?

AJ: Melodic Death Meta/ Folk Metal. My aim was to take parts I liked about some of my favourite bands and meld them together. Most prominently I would say if you took Ensiferum, Wintersun and Amon Amarth and smashed them together you would be somewhat close.

AU: You've just put out a new album, is it a concept album? What's the story about?

AJ: It is indeed a concept album; it's your typical "Hero's Journey." The first song, 'Written in the Stars' is the prophecy of a deity who would rise to save the land from a great evil. The second song, 'A Soldier's Song,' is where you meet the hero who is currently fighting in a militia in a foreign war trying to dethrone a tyrant king. The third song, 'Magic Mead,' takes place post battle where during a celebratory feast the hero hallucinates a fantastical woman and follows her alone into the forest only to be tricked and put to sleep. The fourth song, 'Black Forest Rain' is a dream sequence in which the hero sees visions of glory for himself in foreign lands. The fifth song, 'Wanderer,' is a voyage across the seas with a crew of his own, with only a vague sense of direction but a purpose seen in his dream. The sixth song, 'North Hammer' is the discovery of an ancient weapon bestowed upon him. The seventh song, 'Tip of the Spear' is his first encounter with the horde of bestial creatures in which he mounts a cavalry attack to destroy them. The eighth song,'Avatar' is about the treacherous journey up a blizzarding mountain to seek the help of an ancient celestial. The ninth song, 'Spellbinder,' is about this ancient celestial and the runic power he imbues into the North Hammer. The tenth song, 'Lion's Winter' is the final reckoning for the bestial horde and the hero's ascension into godliness.

AU: You rearranged the album songs on Bandcamp, with another alternative track listing below – which way do you recommend we listen to it, and why?

AJ: Really I find it depends what you're there for, I personally find the flow of the album is better with track listing of the story not in order, so if you're just there for some quality music this is the route for you. However, if are reading the lyrics and you want a better understanding of the albums overarching story, I would highly recommend the alternate track listing.

AU: What is it about Norse Mythology that calls to you as an artist? Why choose that as your overarching theme or subject?

AJ: I have always been a fan of mythologies of all variety, but Norse mythology is very empowering as an individual. It often talks of ideas of strength of body and mind, determination and perseverance, so it's easy to see why that can be attractive. Plus, you know… the gods are badass. A minor influence would also be that many of the bands I favoured musically at the time were singing about these kinds of things.

AU: Do you have a favourite Norse Legend? I'm very fond of the one where Ratatosk the squirrel is eternally provoking Nidhogg the Dragon and the Eagle, running between them on Ygdrassil.

AJ: Ah, that is a great one! The one about the Mead of Poetry is great, but I'm personally quite fond of the one where Thrym, king of the giants, steals Thor's hammer and holds it ransom in order to be married to Freya. Instead, Thor dresses up as Freya and proceeds to consume entire cows and barrels of mead at the wedding banquet before receiving the hammer and clobbering Thrym, haha!

AU: What can we expect to see at a live North Hammer show? Costumes? Props?

AJ: Costumes, probably. Props, probably. I always wanted to have some banners, drums and horns for a more theatrical showing.

AU: What does the rest of the year have in store for you? Do you have any tours, videos in the works?

AJ: The rest of the year is primarily devoted to finishing up some music for my other projects. However, included in that work is working one another North Hammer full length release.

AU: What are your hopes for the future of North Hammer?

AJ: Of course, I would love to take North Hammer around the world to people everywhere and drink mead in salute to metal, but if the winds don't blow in my favour, I'll probably just keep making records anyway.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already?

AJ: I make mead, a lot… and you should too!

AU: Final words for our readers?

AJ: Thank you for taking the time to read this! And thank you for supporting Absolute Underground Magazine and other webzines, podcasts, internet radio stations, and the list goes on! Cheers to you!

facebook.com/NorthHammerOfficial

PHOTO CREDIT: Diego Fernandez, Editing by Eric Dieterich of Soloman Media

KEN mode

Interview by Willow Gamberg

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

Jesse Matthewson: This is Jesse; guitarist, vocalist, lyricist, management.

AU: KEN mode is releasing a new album at the end of August, *Loved*. What can you tell us about it? How does it compare to your previous releases, musically speaking?

JM: We feel this is the heaviest record we've ever made. We wanted to create something ugly, that made us feel something… a record with tones that bash and scrape. An album that you can put on repeat while exercising; something to inspire pushing the rest of the world out of your head for an hour. We wanted to make a sonic representation of how we've felt for the last three years.

AU: Give us an idea of the writing process behind the new album. Has it evolved or differed at all from past albums?

JM: I don't think the writing process for any of our albums has been the same since our original bassist, Darryl Laxdal, was in the band. We kind of have a tendency to adapt depending on the circumstances of the band at the time. Skot lives in Saskatoon, so regular rehearsals with him aren't possible – as a result we'd do concentrated writing sessions every few months where he and I would try to generate as much material on guitar and bass as possible, then I would try to piece it together with drum parts with Shane and our friend Drew Johnston week by week doing regular rehearsals. We've played with Drew before in this band and also in a side project a number of years ago and reached out to see if he was interested in jamming with us largely for the fun of it. His band Electro Quarterstaff was winding down, so he wasn't really rehearsing with anyone regularly at the time. We took the opportunity to test out some of the new material I'd been doing with Skot, and also get to a place where we could just jam as a free form creative process as a three piece again. Now we basically have two different writing units for the band – myself, Shane, and Skot, and myself, Shane, and Drew. Drew wrote 'Fractures in Adults' with us, while the bulk of the remaining material on the album was written with Skot, yet arranged by me while working with Shane and Drew. We'll likely get back to developing more material with Skot once we've got some of the touring for this album out of the way, meanwhile we're still developing material with Drew right now – we'll see where those songs end up!

AU: Do you explore any particular lyrical themes or topics on *Loved*? Would you say it is more or less funny than your last releases?

JM: We definitely think this album is the funniest one we've ever made – yet for people not digging deeper, it's going to sound super depressing and harsh. Love, loss, paranoia, depression, political polarization, the nature of psychological manipulation, the pitfalls of certainty… the album is largely a thinking person's reaction to the political and technological landscape we're presently living in.

AU: You're known for appreciating the value of comedy and incorporating it into your music – why is comedy important for you as a band?

JM: If you're paying attention to everything that goes on around you – you're either laughing or you're crying, right? We're all big fans of the art of stand-up comedy, and frankly enjoy adding a degree of dark humour into the relatively dark form of music we make. At this point in our "careers" we're just trying to make being in a band fun for ourselves, and this is just another way of going about doing that.

AU: You have a few tour dates in September, in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Calgary, can you tell us what those will be like? Do you have plans for further touring this year?

JM: The trio of shows in central/western Canada were meant to be more of a series of "hometown" record release shows that we were contemplating doing when Biff, from noise sludge legends Shallow North Dakota, got in touch with me about the possibility of doing a Winnipeg show with us. They haven't really played any shows since the early '00s, and we thought their addition could make these three shows something really special for a really weird subsect of the music community in Western Canada. So, we're doing that run, then going out for a brief run in the Midwest/east coast USA, Ontario and Quebec with Birds in Row, followed by a few weeks in Europe also with Birds in Row and Coilguns.

We can't tour like we used to anymore, as Shane and I are busy running our own management services company – but the dates we are doing, we want to make really cool. We're hoping we can pull off doing the odd short run every few months, to kind of break up the commitment, and keep things bite sized.

AU: I've seen you perform in both Calgary and Vancouver; your live shows are always dynamic and wild – what is your philosophy when it comes to live performance? What drives you onstage?

JM: We want the music to look the way it sounds. It's intense music, being created by relatively intense people, getting lost in the moment. Our approach to our live show is the same as the music in which we write – we're just trying to create something that we would like to see/hear. We try to manage the aesthetics of everything involved in this project – to make sure it represents us as a group, and as individuals.

AU: You've also put out a few videos already, do you have plans in the works for any more?

JM: We've got one more in the works, by our main video collaborator Christopher Mills – using some of the footage shot by another friend Jim Agapito. The goal was to be able to produce three videos for this album, that all followed a similar aesthetic. I feel we're getting better with this with every album – a more cohesive expression. More unified in its approach and execution.

AU: Your DIY work ethic is both acclaimed and very much in evidence on your social media platforms – is this a critical part of the band's philosophy, and why?

JM: We're not in a position to be paying others to be doing anything for us, and frankly, this type of music has never been about any of that rockstar bullshit to begin with. We were raised on books like *Get in the Van* and *Our Band Could Be Your Life* – the DIY mentality has always been a monkey on our back, likely dating back to the fact that even our parents ran their own company. Small business is just a way of life for us. Maybe it's easy for us to say that given we're not a "big" band, so it's not a hassle for us to attempt to work with our followers on a personal level… outsider music is supposed to be all about bunch of nerds coming together over the things they all mutually have in common anyway. Working at it this way makes it all feel more special to me; that sense of community.

AU: I understand you have an accomplished grant writer or two in the band, what advice do you have for bands seeking grants and funding?

JM: Get your shit together and build some tools to help you understand how to run a business. Music grants in Canada are in many ways even more complicated than grants in other industries because so many artists are such colossal failures when it comes to the business management side that these institutions need to cover their asses. If you don't understand something, ask questions, and try to seek help. We are lucky to have a lot of these programs here, and you do need to understand that these aren't a right – they're a privilege.

AU: What does the next year hold for KEN mode, anything you're particularly stoked for that you can tell us about?

JM: Well, we're stoked for *Loved* to finally be out, and to get back to playing shows again… we've only played a handful of them since 2015 when we took a break from the road. It'll just be nice to get to see our friends all over the world, and I hope some interesting festival opportunities can come up. We'll see what 2019 has in store, as we've pretty much got our dance card filled up to the end of December right now.

AU: You've mentioned eating food as a main band interest in several interviews... What's your favourite road food? If the van breaks down in remote Siberia, which band member would you eat first?

JM: Who doesn't enjoy eating food? I guess there are plenty of bands whose main focus while on the road is abusing drugs and partying… since we're boring, I suppose we prefer to stuff our faces with all of the different cuisines available to us as we go city to city. Usually the biggest novelty for us, particularly when we tour in the US, is access to proper Mexican food and southern BBQ. Both of these are in short supply north of the border, so whenever we head south we make a point of abusing this luxury. Getting things like Yelp changed the game for us touring wise. Before that, we'd basically operated on whims, and whatever was nearest to the venue we were playing at. Now we can figure out where we're going to eat before we head into cities and make a point of making time to go get food before we load in for the night.

We both know we're never touring in remote Siberia…but regardless, Skot – we're sorry.

AU: Speaking of touring, what does life on the road look like with KEN mode? What's your essential tour survival kit, and does it always include a comedian?

JM: For the past few years, it seems like ¾ of our touring has included a comedian. I recommend it! It definitely keeps van morale higher and keeps down time way more entertaining – though I suppose it helps when you're friends with said comedian and have known him since high-school. We're pretty straight forward when it comes to life on the road though, otherwise. You need your clothes bag, a personal item/bag (laptop, note pad, iPod, smart phone, chargers, etc), we have mats for sleeping on, sleeping bags, pillows… in 2018 I'm going to probably do more boxing and cardio on the road, so I'm bringing gloves, focus mitts, and a jump rope. We load up on podcasts and music for the long drives, and I'm going to make a point of reaching out to friends to pre-pick up the finest of craft beer on each stop so we can bring a decent cache home for winter consumption.

AU: What do you all do when you're not touring? Do you have day jobs, hobbies?

JM: After we were finished doing a massive Canada/US tour for our *Success* album, we were pretty burnt out. We'd been full-timing it for the past five years, and really weren't having fun doing it anymore – especially since it's not like we were making a comfortable living doing so. It seemed like our rock and roll fantasy camp had come to a close and it was time to figure out what we were going to do moving forward. Over the course of a few months, Shane and I came up with the idea to use our post-secondary book smarts and previous industry experience and create a practice that provides business services to touring musicians. We took over our parents' consulting company, MKM Management Services Ltd., re-branded it, and spent the next two years building our company into something that actually feeds us! While all of this was happening, Skot continued his job as Film Programmer for Broadway Theatre in Saskatoon, SK, - flying to film fests around the continent, and made records with his bands Adolyne and Grey Light District.

As for hobbies, both Jesse and Skot host radio shows in their respective cities (Thick & Friendly Radio on CKUM at the University of Manitoba, and The End Times Transmissions + Reel to Reel on CFCR in Saskatchewan respectively), and both guys also train Muay Thai kickboxing – with Jesse having done so for the last 11.5 years at Canadian Fighting Centre in Winnipeg, also spending some time this year at Sitmonchai in Thailand coincidentally at the same time as Mary from Self Defence Family.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already?

JM: Despite being on a "bigger" label, we're still intensely DIY. We fund our own records, videos, marketing; we pack our own mail-orders; last record cycle we even went back to booking our own tours. Record sales matter to small fish like us to recoup and continue putting out music that holds a certain professional standard.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

JM: Hopefully we'll see people out on the road! Thanks!

www.ken-mode.com

PHOTO CREDIT: Brenna Faris

Sick Things

Interview by Roger the Shrubber

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

Cameron Turin: This is Cameron, I sing and play guitar in Sick Things. I am the tallest member of the band and once I slipped in a man's bathroom in Norway, and whilst bracing my fall, ripped his sink out of the wall.

AU: Give us a brief history of your band, who are you and how did you form?

CT: So the band is composed of myself, Patrick Bennett on bass, Matt Gonzalez on drums and Keith "Space Frehley" Lewtas on guitar. The band formed in late 2015, we quickly recorded a three-song tape for Shake Records, had a line up change, and now were here! Initially, the band came together because Keith and I wanted to continue playing after doing a one-off Replacements cover show. I had known Matt for a few years, seeing him at mine and Pat's old band, Barn Burner's show. Matt had an Ace Frehley pin on his jacket and also likes the Hellacopters, so we instantly bonded. Pat and I had already played together before, and who doesn't want their best friend in the band? We made a record last year with Ian Blurton, and played last years Osheaga, as a last minute replacement for Solange, sort of. And now we're here.

AU: Can you describe your sound, for those of us who've never heard you before?

CT: One review described it better than I ever could, they wrote that we, "put the 'power' in power-pop." It's fun, non-aggressive rock music, with guitar solos and winks to our heroes of the old days. Some have said we have an old sound, others have said we have a modern sound, I think it's truly in the mind of the person listening, and either one suits us fine.

AU: You just released a new album, tell us about it! Does it explore any particular themes or topics?

CT: Yes! The album was half written by me before we knew we were making a record, and the other half when it was clear we had a good thing going and wanted to release an album. I tried to write from personal experiences, stories I remembered, just topics you can put your whole heart behind. I find it easier to sing like you mean it when you're thinking and singing about something that you hold close to you. I would say 10/11 songs are about being a loser in love, from all the different points of view. The record is kind of like the letter you mean to send to someone, the letter where you tell them everything and spill your guts, in hoping that it'll give you closure. Writing the record, it wasn't immediately obvious that this theme was tying them all together.

AU: What is your band philosophy when it comes to writing and performing music?

CT: We joke about something called "Success Vision." The idea is you just imagine the things you want, ie, we're going to play very tight and nail all of our punches, and you keep them in mind while you play. But that stuff is all nonsense, so we just say the words "success vision" to one another before we go on stage. Then we laugh and have fun. That's the single most important thing, having fun. With writing, I usually track all the instrumentation and vocals myself, and send them to the band to give a yes or no. We have pretty hectic personal lives, so it's just easier than sitting in a jam room trying to write all together. If it gets a yes, we practice it until we hate it, and we constantly try and squeeze as much fun and excitement out of the different parts. So, practice until you hate each other and also have fun.

AU: What can we expect to see at a live Sick Things show?

CT: Well, at the last show, we covered Queen, and Pat and I kissed. That one's going to be hard to top, but typically you'll get some bad jokes from me, a lot of dancing, endless waves of enthusiasm and fun, all set to some ripping guitars. It's kind of like Rodney Dangerfield stand-up; it's self-deprecating, but delivered in a way to make you have a good time. We play songs that deal with some not so uplifting themes, but we set it to this toe-tapping rhythm with choruses every one can sing along to. Maybe you come to the show and you're down, or having troubles, or it's just not your day. We're up there saying, "Take my hand, we're gonna go through this together," we're going to sweat and dance and sing our bloody heads off.

AU: What is the recipe for a writing a great power pop song?

CT: I think each part of the song should be competing for the chorus. Build it all up, and then try and make it as concise as possible, so the listener has to hit re-play when the song is over. Over indulging in music is very easy, so we try to keep everyones' attention by not dragging on too long. Also, not having an attitude. It's supposed to be poppy and accessible, so trying to come off as tough doesn't seem to mesh well with this style of music, and might alienate some of the audience.

AU: What does the rest of the year have in store for Sick Things? Will you be recording any more? Shooting more videos?

CT: We're going to start pre-production on the next record, which is pretty much done being written. I never stopped writing after the first record wrapped, so while we waited for the release, we had amassed nearly two albums worth of material which we've since trimmed down. We're also in the planning stages of our next video, which will coincide with the release of our next single, likely to come out sometime in the fall. Content is king in this day and age, so we're really focused on that aspect right now.

AU: What inspires you as a band, musically or otherwise? Anything we might find surprising?

CT: The band all digs on a lot of the same music, a lot of garage rock and punk, NWOBHM, classic glam and rock bands, which is why we sound the way we do. I think we listened to Dio every morning on the way to the studio while we recorded the album. I draw a lot of inspiration for songs from street photography, staring at pictures and writing down the emotions or feelings that I see. Literature, too. Sometimes I stumble on a line that just levels me and I'll re-read it over and over, and all of a sudden I'm looking at a song from a whole new angle. The rest of the inspiration I think comes from the people in the band, they inspire me to give them my absolute best, and it's reciprocated.

AU: What's happening in Montreal right now that we should know about, music-wise?

CT: Montreal has so much happening, it's staggering. Every where you go, there's a festival, an event, a launch or a debut. We've got underground festivals like Suoni, Distortion Psychefest, and Slut Island, happening in between the big corporate festivals, so it's non-stop from nearly March to December. We're also seeing more marginalized people given the space through these fests and venues, to create and perform but also to attend and feel comfortable, and it's really beautiful. If I'm going to pinpoint a specific band though, my vote is Pale Lips. If you like bubblegum pop-garage rock, this is your band. They sound like they came out of a sugary cereal box, perfect Ramones meets The Crystals vibe. We had them on the bill for our album release show, and they slayed.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already?

CT: Everyone in the band is a guitar player. In fact the two best guitar players in the band are playing bass and drums. Keith has a couple of nicknames. "Chef" because at any point in our travels, if we stop, he is buying food and "Space Frehley" because his love of pot may have affected his memory a tad. Matt is originally from Lyon, France and has the uncanny ability to forget some important piece of equipment somewhere. He is also always smiling, even when he's about to throw up. Pat likes to preface all his boring stories with, " Hey do you want to hear a boring story?" They are as boring as they are abundant. I'm a know-it-all asshole who has a tendency to start sentences with a drawn out "Actually..." in a nasally Norm MacDonald voice.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

CT: Yes, buy our record. Oh, and in the words of the late, great Warren Zevon; "enjoy every sandwich."

https://thesickthings.bandcamp.com

PHOTO CREDIT: Guillaume Mérineau

Tristan Risk

Interview by Michael Allen

Absolute Underground: So, let us just jump into the first question, here. How hard was it to sit in a make-up chair for two hours on *American Mary* (2012)?

Tristan Risk: It was not really that hard because it was early in the morning. I had to be there first, before any of the other actors, to get the make-up done. And, that meant that the make-up artist had to be there before I got there. So, they were there way earlier. But, it also meant that I got to fall asleep in the chair as they stuck things to my face.

AU: In *ABCs of Death 2*, you played Yumi, in "T is for Torture Porn." This was your second time working with Jen and Sylvia Soska. Do you hope to one day turn the camera around and film the Soska sisters in something?

TR: I would be delighted to film the Soska sisters in something. I think they are extremely talented actors as well as directors and they actually started out in acting, when they were first getting into the industry. They always got cast as sexy twins, all the time. It was not fulfilling for them. I think if they were given challenging enough roles, then they would rise to that challenge as we have seen in *Dead Hooker in a Trunk* (2009). They were also guest stars in *ABCs of Death 2*, in "W is for Wish." You can actually see them torturing somebody as the elevator is going down.

AU: Now, in *Harvest Lake* (2016), you played Cat. There is a strange, sexual and supernatural entity in the film. Can you talk a little bit about the film and your role?

TR: I played Cat. She is a bit of a party girl. Her whole thing is she is going up there with her boyfriend, that weekend. She is like, "I am going to give him the same thing I give him every year. I just wrap it up a bit different." Then, she is trying to get her friend to have a threesome with them, because that is the present. Then, her friend is like, "Are you kidding me?" And, she is like, "Ewww!" I thought it was pretty funny. Because, I think a lot of people perceive me to be something like that. But, I am actually the opposite of that. I am usually the one who has the worst experiences with the creepy polyamorous people and the creepy swingers, fixating on me. They are often like, "We really like you." And I am like, "I really like me, too." Then, they say, "We really want to take you home." I am like, "I am out of here, weirdos."

AU: I saw a couple of your interviews and you mentioned boundaries a few times. It is good that you have those personal boundaries.

TR: I have lots of friends who are polyamorous and they are respectful. It is a certain kind of people, who are like, "Hey, we want to try something new with you." I always respond, "I will let you know."

AU: *Ayla* just had its Canadian premiere at the Vancouver Badass Film Festival, this past February. You play the title character, Ayla. What was it like to transition from smaller roles into a central role, for this film?

TR: I liked playing Ayla a lot. First of all, I had no dialogue. So, I had to act entirely with my body and my face, which was something very unusual for me. Because, I am used to being under a lot of prosthetic makeup. And, there were lines to help emote with. I was really having to go back to some of my dance and theatre training and speak with my eyes. The upside to that I did not have any lines to learn, so I could be completely obnoxious on set when poor Nicholas Wilder was trying to remember dialogue. I would say, "Oh yeah, what was my line again?" They were like, "Oh Tristan, you be quiet now." But, it was great. I loved playing that character. It was so weird and dark. Elias was such a great director to work with. It was a positive experience, for me.

AU: One of your latest projects is the short, horror film "Parlour Tricks." There is a bit of burlesque in it. What is your role in the film? Can you talk about the story a little bit?

TR: I can. I will just correct you on it. I don't actually play any characters in that film. I wrote and directed it. It is my first time as a director, but not my first time as a writer. I co-wrote a script with a director named Kate Kroll. She directed the film. It was called *The Happily Ever Evil* (2014). This was my first time dipping my toe in the directorial waters. I was really spoiled. I wrote this script with this cast in mind and I was able to convince all of these fantastic people to take part in the film.

I was also able to entice Topher Graham and Jordan Barnes-Crouse, from Bad Cookie Pictures, to help me with the production of it. And, it really came together very smoothly. And, I am so, so excited. I have Chris Woods, from Blackberry Woods, doing the scoring on it. It is in post now. It just needs to have a few more things added in, sound-wise. It should be ready for film festival submissions in two weeks.

AU: Last question, is there anything else coming up, for you, that you would like to mention before we sign out?

TR: We are going back to Game Over. This is Game Over's second year. It will be at the fabulous Waldorf Hotel, in Vancouver. It features panels, walk-ons, live sideshows, circus performers and a video game cosplay theme and cosplay contests. There will also be retro gaming arcade there. So, it is going to be pretty fun.

I do have three or four projects coming down the pipe, in various states of pre-production. And now, it is just a game to see which one is getting made first, when it is getting made and where it is getting made.

Frankenstein Created Bikers (2016) has been released as far as I know. It can be viewed. It is on the film festival circuit. And, James Bickert is releasing *Amazon Hot Box* (2018), which I was also a part of. That one will be coming out in June, I believe.

AU: Okay, I just wanted to say thanks for taking the time to do this interview. I really appreciate it.

TR: No problem. Thanks for giving me the time.

More on Tristan Risk can be found at her website, below, where, she sells prints, magazines and signed photos.

www.littlemissrisk.ca

28DLA.com

PHOTO SOURCE: Tristan Risk

AUGUST 2018

02 KING OF FOXES + THE SILKSTONES
03 THE ACACIA STRAIN + LEFT BEHIND + I AM
04 THE NORTHERN COAST + SURF DADS + LANDOS + THE NIGHT TERRORS
09 BODY LENS + DRI HIEV + POLLY DACTIC + POSTNAMERS + OBJECT_OPTION

AUG 18 — ALL HANDS ON JANE EP RELEASE

AUG 23 — POWERGLOVE + RAVENOUS + ILLYRIAN

18 ALL HANDS ON JANE EP RELEASE + 36? + GONE COSMIC + COLBY MORGAN & THE CATASTROPHES
22 OHGR + LEAD INTO GOLD + OMNIFLUX
23 POWERGLOVE + RAVENOUS + ILLYRIAN
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10 CALGARY BEERCORE BIRTHDAY SHOW
15 SIX DEGREES OF MOVIE TRIVIA
16 FAKE MUSTACHE
17 HANG THE DJ — NO COVER BEFORE 10PM — RETRO · NEW WAVE · CLASSIC ALTERNATIVE · GOTH · INDUSTRIAL · BRITPOP
18 WOOHOO! SIMPSONS TRIVIA

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08 HANG THE DJ — RETRO · NEW WAVE · CLASSIC ALTERNATIVE · GOTH · INDUSTRIAL · BRITPOP
11 ANDREW WK
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27 SHOCK THERAPY DARK VARIETY SHOW
28 DYING FETUS + INCANTATION + GATECREEPER + GENOCIDE PACT
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Chuck Ragan

Interview by Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to?

Chuck Ragan: My name is Chuck Ragan and I'm happy to be here at Rock The Shores tonight.

AU: You played at exactly 4:20!

CR: Which was late.

AU: It was a miracle. You were a little bit late and you just hopped out and you were playing within two minutes.

CR: Yep, pretty much.

AU: Explain the situation.

CR: Yeah, we were late. We had some miscommunications with the stage manager that we needed to be here at four for a load in, we didn't realize we were playing at four! We rolled in and literally jumped out, plugged in, and went. We should have been a little earlier but that was the best we could have done today.

AU: Was Hot Water Music your first band?

CR: No, we all had different bands growing up as young kids but Hot Water Music was kind of the first band where we broke out of our teenage mold, toured around the country, and then went around the world. It's definitely the band where people learned who we were over the years.

AU: I really like the album *Caution*, and there are is the song about gambling. Was that inspired by Vegas or Punk Rock Bowling at all?

CR: No, it's more inspired by hard living. Gambling like, living on the edge. Living hard.

AU: So you adapt well to Vegas?

CR: I'm not a gambler so to speak, well maybe I am. I am a fisherman. I guess that's gambling every time you go out.

AU: Do you adapt well to Canada?

CR: Oh yeah, I love it here. I feel at home here.

AU: We got some good salmon fishing here.

CR: Oh yeah, beautiful place.

AU: Are you a cut a hole in the ice kinda guy?

CR: No, I'm a fly fisherman. That's what I do at home for work. I'm a fly fishing guide and instructor back in Northern California.

AU: What's the difference between Hot Water Music and your solo stuff?

CR: I mean, it's definitely not as loud as Hot Water Music but a lot of the writing is along the same lines in terms of always searching, always looking to be a better human, and a better friend, and a better family man. Always looking for the light at the end of a tunnel on a dark day.

AU: And being invited to festivals around the world as just you?

CR: I feel very lucky, very blessed to be here. Pretty incredible. Everybody here has been fantastic, I'd love to come back for sure.

AU: So when Hot Water Music played Punk Rock Bowling was that a reunion, or is everything ongoing?

CR: Hot Water next year will be our 25th anniversary. We're writing some new music right now, so we will eventually release something else. All of us are pretty spread out right now, we have been for years. We still get out, we still play shows. We go over to Europe this coming August. So yeah, we all stay active. Love to play with each other, love to play music and have a great time. Same with solo stuff, it's always ongoing. My wife and I have a three-year-old at home, so I'm definitely not touring like I used to and I'm completely fine with that.

AU: Any crazy stories from when you played Punk Rock Bowling this year?

CR: I remember it being way past my bedtime when we played, I know that much. It was late.

AU: Final words for Canadian fans?

CR: Oh man, I'm just so appreciative. Everyone who has supported my music, Hot Water Music, or anything that we have done. We absolutely love coming up here, and would love to continue coming up here. Like I said before, people make us feel at home up here. It's gorgeous, it's paradise. I'm always looking forward to it. Thanks for the support.

chuckraganmusic.com

www.hotwatermusic.com

Baptists

Interview by Erik Lindholm

Absolute Underground: Good evening... set the scene for our readers, where are you now and what are you up to?

Danny Marshall: I'm at home doing this while my youngest daughter and her friend are colouring, haha.

AU: The new album is called *Beacon Of Faith*, where does that theme come from for you? What do you want to get across to listeners with this album?

DM: The album name comes from a track that we all really like on the album and is also a song about people following a mindset or belief blindly out of comfort, convenience or whatever it may be. I don't want to speak too much for Andrew about what he wants to convey lyrically on this album, but it touches on things from that, to social injustices he sees through his work with at-risk individuals to how he personally copes (or may not cope) with being in that environment.

AU: What is your beacon in life? What keeps you grounded?

DM: My family, listening to and playing music, skateboarding once in a while.

AU: You're based in Vancouver – what meaning does that have for you? It's a city of opposites; wealth and poverty living alongside each other... going through a lot of change currently.

DM: I've actually lived in Kelowna for a few years now but lived in Vancouver for ten years before that. We're based as a band in Vancouver, though, and I'm not really sure what that means to us, if anything. I mean, yes, Andrew's jobs in the downtown east side definitely influence our lyrical content, but if we were in a different city, there would be problems there for us to sing about, too. Vancouver's drug epidemic does give it a different set of challenges, and the housing market being insane is squeezing a lot of people in various walks of life out of the city or out of their neighborhoods, but every city is fucked.

AU: The song "Victim Services," can you take us through how that came about?

DM: I can take you through how it came about musically, I guess! I had written the last riff in the song first and had it kicking around for quite a while - to me it's very Hot Snakes-ish, which was appealing. When I came up with the verse and chorus afterwards, I wasn't sure that it would fly, as it's pretty rock 'n roll for us. But here we are.

AU: How did you enjoy recording in Salem, Massachusetts at the Godcity studio? With all the heavy bands through there, you're in good company...

DM: Yeah, we love it out there. This is the third Baptists album we've recorded with Kurt. We're really comfortable working with Kurt, and we always have a great time. I don't think anyone out there would have a better idea of what we're going for than him.

AU: Where do you want to tour next – and what would your dream lineup be?

DM: We've gotta get over to Europe. Two of us have never been. I think all of our dream line-ups would be different, but personally, maybe Disfear, Hot Snakes, Neurosis, Converge… Nirvana… haha.

AU: What would you consider your biggest influence in making the music on this record? It could be musical or not. Inspiration is found in many forms!

DM: The main musical influences for me writing this album were pretty much the same as the dream-tour list above… ha. Hot weather, too. I wasn't ready for the dry, 40 degree Kelowna summers when we moved back, and I think it brought out a little sweaty spaghetti western feel here and there.

AU: What do most people overlook in their lives? What do you wish we would pay better attention to?

DM: I don't know what other people overlook. I overlook a lot of things. I wish that I would play with my kids every single time they ask and forget about whatever seems important at the time, but ultimately is not.

AU: Piece of gear you find indispensable and why – trying to keep the information flowing for musicians out there.

DM: I really like my Orange AD140. I've had it since before this band and it has a pretty distinct sound, I think, although the only recording of our that it's on is our first 7". I'm also pretty attached to my GCI guitar. There are a couple things I'd change on it, but it feels like our riffs sound. I don't know if it would be very fun for anyone else to play as-is.

AU: Last words to those listening at home and staring at a full moon:

DM: I don't know… stop?

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Bewitcher

Transcribed from The GKO Show
By Ryan Swinney

Absolute Underground: I'm here with two thirds of Bewitcher from Portland, OR, why don't you introduce yourselves and tell us your role in the band.

Rand: I'm Rand Crusher, I lay down the drums.

Andreas: I'm Andreas Von Bewitcher, the bass player.

AU: You guys are on tour right now with Savage Master, what's it like being on the road?

Andreas: A lot of driving, a lot of sleeping in the van, a lot of early mornings in truck stops finding cheap coffee. But honestly tour, is what I call real, true, ultimate freedom. All three of us quit our jobs for this so it's legit no safety net, no backup plan, just climb in the van and go play heavy metal. It's as real as it gets.

AU: You guys have done a few full U.S. tours at this point right?

Andreas: This technically will be our second full U.S. tour.

AU: Awesome! You did one last year, how many shows did you do on that tour?

Andreas: The first tour we did 31 shows, and this one will be 35. All together with days off, it's about six weeks.

AU: You're doing a number of Canadian shows on this tour as well aren't you?

Andreas: Yep. We've got Victoria tonight, Vancouver tomorrow, and then Calgary and Winnipeg.

AU: Do you guys have an new album on the way or are you working on anything right now?

Rand: Yeah, so after the tour we get back and rehearse for maybe nine days and then go into the studio in June to record album number two. Then I think the idea is to shoot a music video supporting the album in July. The album is forecasted to come out maybe beginning of next year, we'll probably cut a single prio to the end of 2018 and then we'll work from there.

AU: You'll probably plan on touring that album as well then?

Andreas:That's the plan. Full world tour!

Rand: We're unleashing a couple of new songs each night. On the current tour we've been cycling through four songs in the running order, we'll play a couple for a few shows and then play the others for a couple shows and it's been working out really well.

AU: Nice! How are you guys feeling about the new songs?

Andreas: Oh they're really good, definitely. It's the first album but it's hard to find the right word I want to say, bigger. Epic's a really overused word but the songs are just a little bit more fleshed out, a bit more substance to them. We still have the two, three-minute rippers that we're known for but we're trying to broaden the palette a little bit and try some things that people maybe wouldn't expect from us, still within the realm of what Bewitcher does.

AU: What do you guys draw on externally for inspiration when you're writing new songs? Is there anything you do or artists gthat you're inspired by?

Andreas: Well the band at the heart is definitely Motorhead, Venom, Battery, Celtic Frost. But I think on this next batch of tunes we've got a lot of inspiration from early to mid 80ss heavy metal. Mat's the main songwriter so he might be a better person to ask but tons of influence from bands like Wasp, Dokken, 80s era Black Sabbath, Headless Cross. Right now the vibe is like 1984, there's so many good records that came out of that year so that's what we're channeling.

Rand: Absolutely. I think on this one I'm personally bringing a little bit more technicality as far as the drums are concerned. With influences like Sean Reinert from Death on the album *Human*. So I think you'll hear a bit more diversity as far as the drums are concerned on the next one.

AU: How did Bewitcher come together?

Andreas: Mat and I, our old band was falling apart basically. He'd had the idea forever of doing a traditional heavy metal band but he really drew upon that Motorhead and Venom vibe. He and I got together and started demo-ing tunes, and that grew into a couple demos that got released on tape. Then a couple years later we got a hold of our old buddy Rand here, we were trying to find a drummer who not only could do the job that needed to be done, because it's not like we were looking for Rush or Dream Theatre or anything we were just looking for a hard hitter, but also fit the part. So we got a hold of him and it was pretty much one practice then we were like, "Alright, let's rock n roll." The rest, as they say, is history.

Rand: Here we are three years later.

AU: No looking back.

Andreas: Exactly man it's all forward now, no time for looking back!

AU: Thanks for being on the show guys!

Bewitcher: Thank you!

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Knacker's Yard

Interview by Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?

Wolf Edwards: This is Wolf.

AU: What was the genesis of your band Knacker's Yard? Give us a brief band history. When did you get started?

WE: We started November 2012. So it's been six years already!

I'd always wanted to perform in a folk band of some type, having been brought up on artists like Bob Dylan, Buffy Sainte Marie, John Prine, Hank Williams, Leonard Cohen, Woody Guthrie, Ramblin Jack, Odetta, Robert Johnson, and such. My brother and I always loved folk music and wanted to start a folk band, even when we were very young, but never had the opportunity to do so. Though the idea was always floating around. He actually beat me to it with his band The North Country Ramblers, who were around for a few years in the early 2000s.

Around 1997 or so, I had an experience that really changed things around for me with regard to folk music. While seeking avant-garde jazz records at a record shop in Victoria, I found a Dubliners record from the 1960s entitled *More of the Hard Stuff*. One glance at the cover (a picture of some rough-looking fellows hanging out in a pub) told me the music was probably going to be good. And it was! Super rugged and hard-sounding folk music from the streets of Ireland. I spun the record and that was it! I now knew what type of folk band I needed to start up. I'd never heard anything like it! I was also very attracted to the subject matter of the songs: love, rebellion, hard work, and resistance.

I asked my folks, being from the East, why they' d not shown me this folk music. Their reply was, "That's what our grandparents listened to!" They also told me that it was no surprise I might like that type of music since I am from Welsh, Irish, Scott, English, French, and Migma (East coast First Nations) blood. I think that was the first time I ever really thought about lineage!

No going back. The band had to be. The only problem was finding other people who were into it, which proved difficult. Everyone was playing, or wanted to play, very soggy singer/songwriter crap. Shit that sounded like 90s garbage, or some kind of left over. There was no guts and no message, just a bunch of self-centered mush. Well, after a number of years, I'd had enough of fooling around with the "folkies" and straight up asked the members of my metal band, Iskra, to join me in creating a group that sounded like the Dubliners. They thought I was nuts but also found me to be serious, and so said they'd give it a go. I also told them that I wanted to do it for a job. That interested them. It took us a year of practice and then we were out performing! And that's that! Over the six years, and hundreds of shows, a few members have come and gone for sure, but there are still two members of Iskra in the band, as well as six other fantastic musicians! The band is now eight members total for local and island gigs, six for far range touring.

AU: What style of music do you play? What are your inspirations?

WE: Hardcore folk music in the style of 1960s and 70s bands from Ireland! Bands like, as already mentioned, The Dubliners but also Planxty, The Pogues, The Bothy Band, The Clancy Brothers, Battering Ram, The Wolfhound, The Corries (Scottland), The Bushwackers and Mucky Duck (Australia), Shirley Collins, the Watersons, and Anne Briggs(England) and basically anything hard-edged and folk! We are often described as being a cross between the Pogues and the Dubliners, which is a nice place to sit!

AU: Who else is in the band? From any previous bands of note.

WE: The band is: Jon MacDonald on guitar (also in a bunch a local punk and metal bands); Cody Baresich on mandolin and backing vocals (also in Iskra, and Storm of Sedition); Steve Johnson on accordion and penny whistle; William FitzGerald on fiddle, Irish pipes, and penny whistle; Bronywn Churcher on fiddle and lead vocal; Dexter Simpson on Irish tenor banjo; Shawn McConnell on Bodhran, bones, and jangles (was in Jonas and some other old hardcore bands from Victoria), and myself on plecrum banjo and lead vocal (Victoria bands Contempt, Black Kronstadt, and Iskra).

AU: What's the meaning behind the band's name?

WE: A Knacker's Yard is a place where things that are no longer in use, or of value, go to be exterminated. It was originally used to designate animals, especially horses, who were no longer useful. They's be sent to the Knacker's Yard for disposal. The word "Knacker" was used afterwards to describe, and degrade, the travelling people of Ireland, and was also a derogatory term for the poor. Since the songs are thought to be worn out and finished, we thought it would be an ironic name, since those would be the songs we were playing! It's also kind of a re-empowerment since the songs were, for the most part, written by travelling people, poor folk, and hard workers. The very people that those in positions of political and economic power might despise!

AU: What are you guys trying to say with your music?

WE: We are trying to re-kindle the old songs/ themes by re-arranging and performing them in a new context thereby facilitating a process of reflection. The themes are often connected to colonization and resistance so we are able to bring up, in our song explanations and practice, parallels to colonization and resistance here in Canada, which is still going on. The resistance to the British Empire in Ireland is a great example of survival and anti-colonial struggle. People can understand that story, and so perhaps reflect on our current situation here in Canada where there is real reconciliation to think about, and act upon, with regard to the indigenous populations. That's one example.

Another example, with regard to the idea of reflection as a method to understanding (a concept borrowed from Walter Benjamin, an early cultural critic), is culture. Thinking of life in terms of culture rather than life under forced systems of power and control. Cultural life can precede and supercede political life., i.e. life under current political structures. The poetry, stories, and philosophy inherent in the songs we play undermine the cheap and oppressive politics of the everyday. That interests us as musicians and writers. The songs are a history written by the people and are therefore more honest, i.e. closer to the concept of truth. They are a great example of everyday folk being in control of their own story and therefore destiny.

AU: How many albums have you released?

WE: We've released five albums! Since we've learned how to play, it's been one a year.

AU: Tell us about your latest release.

WE: The latest release is entitled *Gangers, Chancers, and the Craic*. It was recorded live off the floor (max three takes) by Joby Baker who is a sort of legendary recording artist. It has 17 songs which were recorded in one six-hour session.

AU: Tour plans?

WE: Yes, we're touring out to the Roots Festival in Oliver, and will be playing Milkcrate Records in Kelowna and then in September we have a ten-date tour through BC and Alberta. Check our listings and come to the shows!

AU: What can the people expect from your live show?

WE: An energetic explosion of acoustic instruments and fast played classic folk songs from Ireland, Scotland, and England! Lots of rebel songs, sea songs, and drinking songs from the old world!

AU: What is your band's ultimate goal?

WE: Be a full time band, make a living from it (however frugal), and tour.

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knacker's yard

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Desire Tattoo Studio

Interview by Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?

DD: Des Douglas, Owner of Desire Tattoo Studio in Nanaimo, BC.

AU: How did you get started tattooing?

DD: Pure luck if I'm honest!

I went in to get tattooed by Zain Hull when he moved to Nanaimo, he was impressed that my tattoo ideas were drawn by me, and needed zero changes before tattooing me. He booked me an appointment for a week later and told me to bring my portfolio to my appointment. Showed up for my appointment and was offered an apprenticeship, which I turned down. Twice. I was 20 and had car payments and rent, I couldn't afford to work five days a week for free... and I was afraid. He made me a deal to pay me just enough to cover my bills, but I had to do EVERYTHING for him. From cleaning toilets to being the secretary to making needles, sterilizing and station set-up. I did it all so he just had to come in, sit down pick his machine up and get to work. It was hard, but it was the best year of my life. Here I am today 22 years later. I owe Zain Hull everything, his persistence gave me an amazing career. I have so much love and gratitude for that wonderful, talented, kind man.

AU: Tell us about your tattoo shop? Where are you located? Who works there?

DD: Desire Tattoo is in the heart of Nanaimo on Bowen Rd. There are five of us, including myself @desiretattoo, Cara @carawtattoos, Jenny @ jjarrett22, Lisa @misslisatattoo, and Betty @ inkbybettyb

AU: What sets Desire Tattoo Studio apart from other shops?

DD: We're not like your traditional tattoo shop. We are a non-judgemental, safe, inclusive, all female tattoo studio (but we do have regular male guest spots).

AU: What was the first tattoo you received and what was the first tattoo you did on someone else?

DD: My first tattoo was a Celtic trinity on my solar plexus that I got at the Seattle tattoo emporium in '95 while following Fugazi on tour down the West coast. The first real tattoo I did on someone else was the Pearl Jam alive guy on my (at the time) brother-in-law in '97.

AU: What styles would you say you specialize in?

DD: Bold and colourful is my preference. Although due to the time I started my career, I can do a mean, solid-as-fuck tribal tattoo (apologies to everyone trying to cover those up now!)

AU: What do you love most about tattoos?

DD: Everything? Bringing people's ideas to fruition? What isn't to love about tattoos!

AU: What are your favourite tattoos to do?

DD: Flowers and nature-y type stuff with lots of colour. But I am enjoying the heck out of scar repigmentation, something about matching people's skin tones and giving them some confidence back is super fulfilling.

AU: Do tattoos always have to have a deep meaning or can it be solely about the art?

DD: Hell no, I'm a firm believer in getting tattooed for whatever reason you want. Meaning or not, it's all art to the wearer and if they are happy that's all that matters.

AU: Absolute craziest tattoo you've ever done?

DD: That depends on your version of crazy! Placement-wise, I'd say nothing other than the "normal" stuff like lips, face, skull, etc.. they never want to pay what I charge for the really crazy stuff. Design-wise, I turn a lot of stuff away. My childhood had enough crazy in it for a lifetime. I'm good.

AU: Any favourite types of music you like to listen to while working?

DD: Anything upbeat really. I like a lot of stuff from old school gangster rap to some good old heavy metal. Mr. Bungle and Faith No More are top favourites to get me in the groove, though. Just as long as it's not country... I'll cut a bitch if that shit plays.

AU: Advice for young artists?

DD: Every successful artist has failed more times than you've tried... don't give up. If you work hard, draw every day, don't cut corners, have respect for the industry and have patience with yourself, you will eventually succeed. We're artists, not whores, this shit doesn't come easy!

AU: Any events or promotions you would like to mention?

DD: We're having a Halloween flash event in October, prices range from $80 to a max $250. But you'll have to follow our Instagram and Facebook to find out more!

AU: How do people get ahold of you? Website, facebook?

DD: Phone or email is always best: -250-585-7771 /desiretattoo@hotmail.com

You can find us all on instagram: @desiretattoo @carawtattoos @jjarrett22 @misslisatattoo @ inkbybettyb

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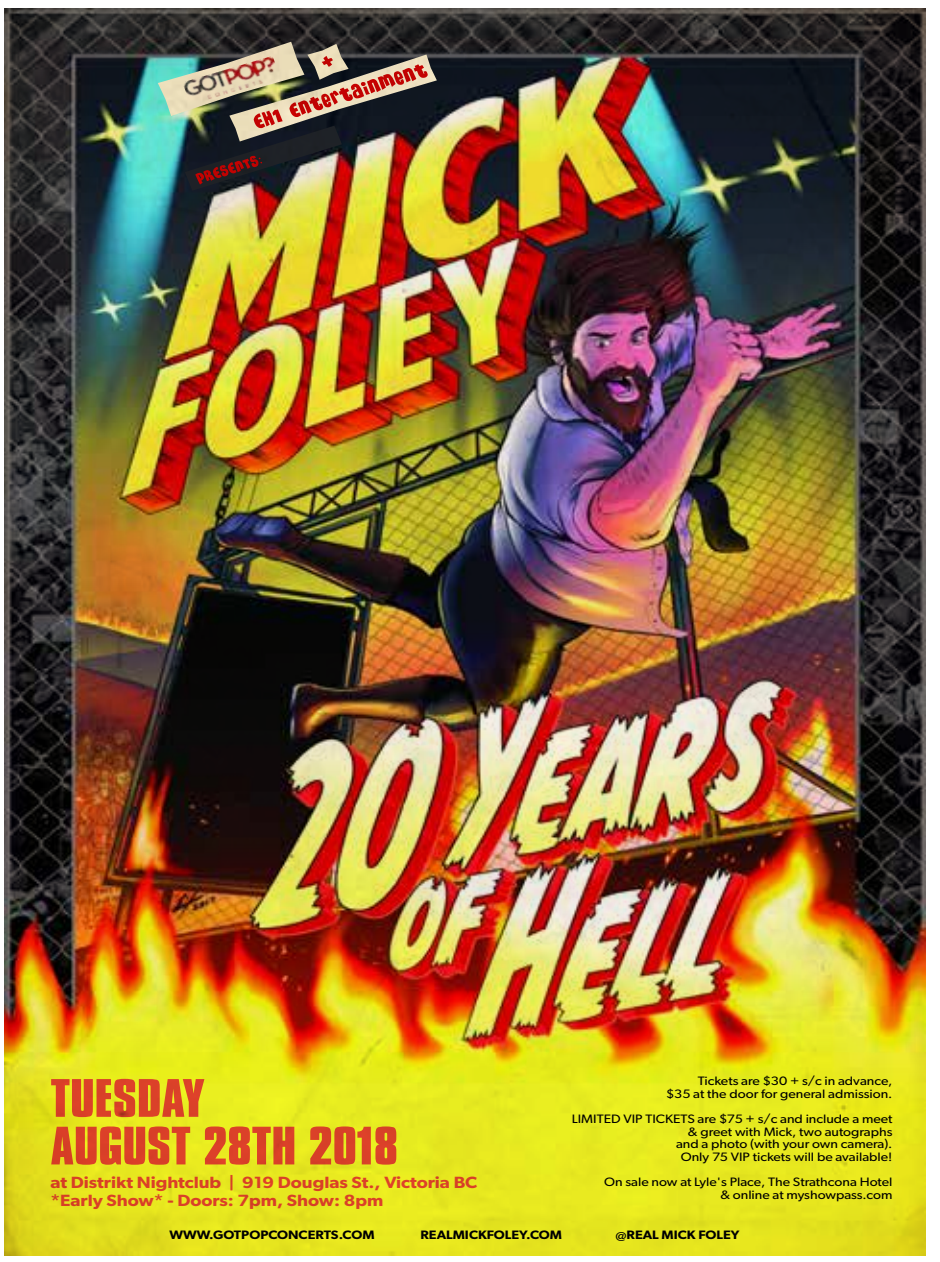

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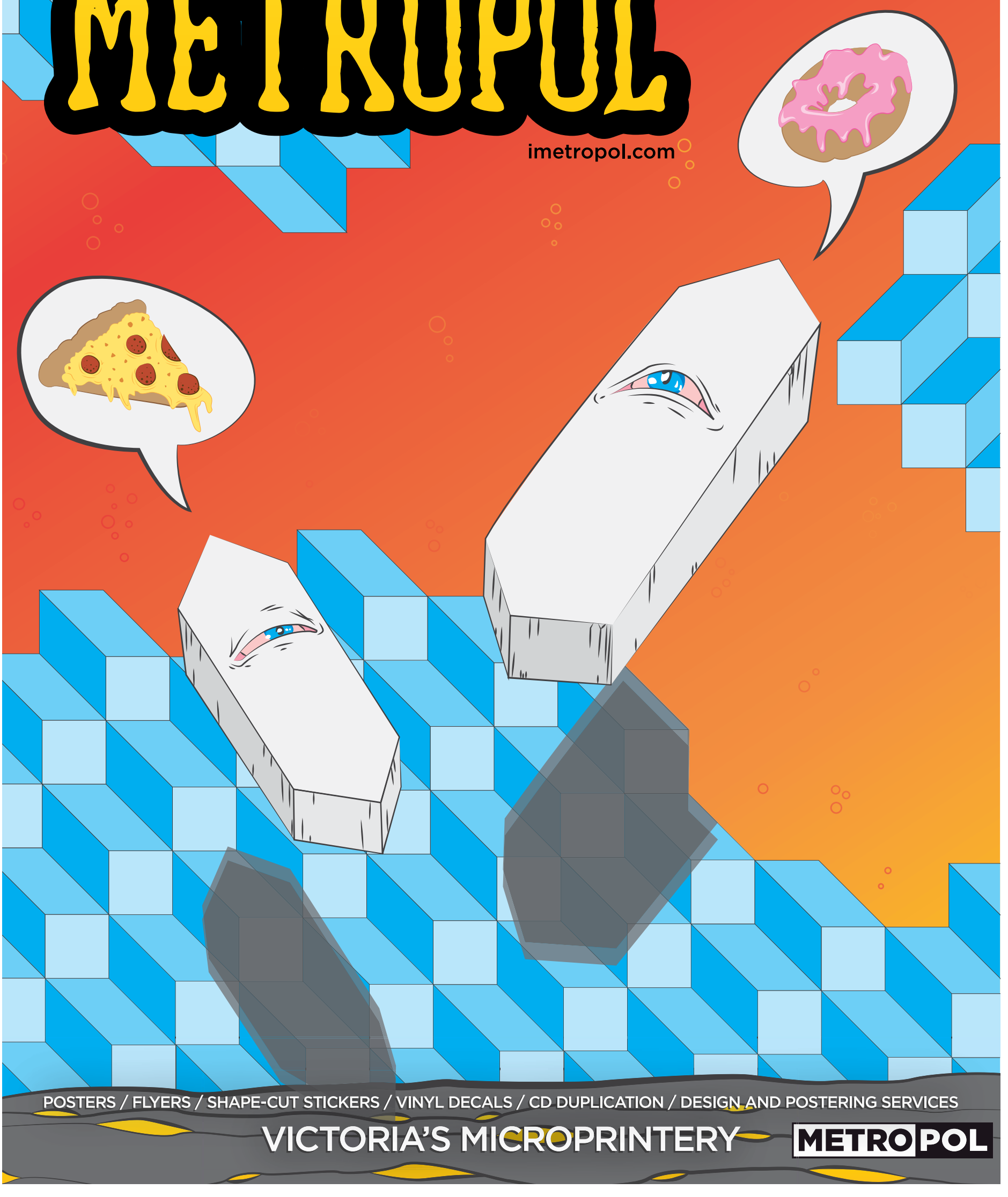

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VICTORIA'S MICROPRINTERY METROPOL

Eleven Years and still no Cult Love...

By Vince D'Amato

August marks eleven years since the Quentin Tarantino / Robert Rodriguez horror-genre collaboration *Grindhouse* hit the big screens across North America. The auteurs' mash-ups of exploitation genres, as well as old and new filmmaking techniques, blended heavily with a nearly overbearing dose of well-intentioned pastiche did not make for a very successful splash in the horror genre – not with the fans nor with the genre film critics at large. *Grindhouse*'s first two weekends at the box office were so abysmal that it prompted The Weinstein Company to split the film in half and release the Tarantino and Rodriguez segments separately (as *Planet Terror* and *Death Proof*) throughout the rest of the world – excluding Japan, where the film was actually quite well received.

Neither of these two influential filmmakers are strangers to creative collaborations with their peers – Tarantino's collaborations with ex-writing-partner Roger Avery brought to life *Reservoir Dogs, True Romance, Natural Born Killers, Killing Zoe*, and the Academy-award-winning *Pulp Fiction*. Rodriguez found some creative and commercial success with his collaborations with *Sin City* author Frank Miller later in his career. In the middle of all of this, and the most famous of these collaborations, were between these two most celebrated film mavericks of the 1990s themselves, Tarantino and Rodriguez, which spawned five films, four of which were directly born of their mutual love of horror-genre cinema. The first of these horror collaborations was the surprise hit *From Dusk Till Dawn*, which Tarantino had originally written as a for-hire gig for special FX maverick

Robert Kurtzman (one of the founders of KNB FX GROUP in Hollywood). *From Dusk Till Dawn* is a kidnapping-heist-turned-vampire-flick that caught most of its unsuspecting audience off guard when it went full swing into gory vampire horror, mixing liberal doses of Mexican vampire lore (courtesy of director Robert Rodriguez) with the undead "rules" of George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* – the latter of which was pointed out by film critic Roger Ebert upon the film's release. Of course, in true Tarantino style, the film also borrowed plenty of moments from Kathryn Bigelow's *Near Dark* and the eighties horror blockbuster *The Lost Boys*.

From Dusk Till Dawn was so successful it was able to spawn two direct-to-video sequels, both produced by Tarantino and Rodriguez. The better of the two sequels was the first to hit the video store shelves, *From Dusk Till Dawn 2: Texas Blood Money*, which retained the first films' themes of heists, foul-mouthed thieves, sexy vampires, and wild gore – albeit within a fraction of the original film's budget. For this second outing, Tarantino and Rodriguez hired a regular collaborator of Sam Raimi's horror films, Scott Spiegel, to direct – a highly appropriate choice of talent considering that the original film was as much influenced by the horror films of Sam Raimi as it was by George Romero. Spiegel's sequel was almost as entertaining as Tarantino's and Rodriguez' original, despite the obvious lack of budget; and the timing of the direct-to-video release was an important factor, too – by the time *From Dusk Till Dawn 3* had hit the video store shelves at the end of 1999, horror fans' interest in the series had already begun to wane.

Eight years later (in 2007), the indie film-world giants would come together again for their epic horror-genre collaboration, *Grindhouse*. Conceptually, the film was meant to be an official double-feature with an eighty-minute horror film by each of the two directors – and the concept itself, sounding like a sure-fire hit to any cult film aficionado, was where the commercial failure began. The Weinstein Company reported that American movie-goers were leaving the theatres after Rodriguez' segment *Planet Terror* had ended, not realizing that there was still half of the double-feature presentation to go, which was one of the key factors that had prompted the studio's

decision to split the film into two individual films for the overseas releases. Meanwhile, on this side of the pond, horror fans and critics appeared to be mostly unimpressed. A film that should have been cause for celebration amongst genre and horror fans was instead the victim of hyper-criticisms and attacks for trying to "fake" a genuine *Grindhouse* exploitation-film experience – which in fact, is exactly what the filmmakers had set out to do. But the thing is, they did it with giddy excitement in their hearts, they were obviously not trying to ostracize the horror film-fan community. The knowing winks and tropes that had worked in *From Dusk Till Dawn* did not work in this new and overblown, explosive rendition of exploitation cinema. Yes, *Grindhouse* is filled to the teeth with horror movie tropes and influences ranging from the likes of John Carpenter to Lucio Fulci to Dario Argento (the latter so much so that he garnered a "Thank You" credit at the end of the film). Outside of the box of horror an exploitation fandom, the movie cut so deeply into new creative ground in genre filmmaking that it influenced a whole new slew of indie and low-budget filmmakers for the next five years. But for some reason, the former darlings of indie film and film school students failed to make an epic horror film that resonated in the horror community – but why?

The obvious cinematic and genre influences of *Grindhouse* go beyond those of Carpenter, Fulci, and Argento... Actually, both Rodriguez' zombies-running-amuck segment and Tarantino's coded slasher-film segment rely heavily on key influences by another filmmaker altogether:

Australian action auteur George Miller. The Rodriguez segment, "Planet Terror", is dangerously overwritten, but it works; in "Planet Terror" we see several seemingly unrelated characters criss-crossing though each others' independent storylines, until they all come together at Jeff Fahey's Texas BBQ joint which is hilariously dubbed 'The Bone Shack'. From there, the zombie mayhem fully takes over, and Rodriguez' film takes on all of the tropes, freakery, and high-octane road-action of George Miller's *The Road Warrior*... Following this, Tarantino gives us his own special version of the slasher film in "Death Proof", where this killer uses his car as the weapon of choice to deal out the film's creative kills – but again, where Tarantino

credits Dario Argento as a main influence, it's actually George Miller's *Mad Max* that is clearly the almost-too-obvious underlying influence in the lengthy car-crashing second half of the film; specifically influencing Tarantino's impressive and intense car stunt cinematography. It's almost enough to make one forget that "Death Proof" is actually a coded cinematic take on a horror rape-revenge scenario, with the killer's car as the cock violently fucking young women to death, (instead of the slasher-film standard butcher knife); we're even shown stuntwoman/co-star Zoe Bell twisting and writhing into an unending series of sexual positions on the hood of her classic Dodge Challenger as it speeds across the asphalt.

But reflecting on the paradoxical influences, and on the simultaneous horror community pushback, of these Rodriguez/Tarantino horror collaborations [in 2007 horror magazine *Rue Morgue* criticized that "the real *Grindhouse* experience is the one you make, not the one you fake", despite using promo art from *Planet Terror* as their full-page cover for that very issue], I still wonder why these filmmakers' genre films (*From Dusk Till Dawn, Grindhouse*), failed to make any real lasting impact within the broader spectrum of horror fans. Robert Rodriguez tried to reignite the energy of 1995's *From Dusk Till Dawn* in an updated and partially successful Netflix series, where the pilot episode took heavily from Tarantino's original script without giving any real due credit, and was abysmally directed by a seemingly aloof Rodriguez (now nearly two decades after his feature film). I don't actually know what any horror fans really thought of the television series version of *From Dusk Till Dawn*, to be perfectly honest, I didn't care enough to look into it. But I do know that while people still talk about the horror films of Sam Raimi and George Romero, and of the films from the filmmakers who went so far as to contribute fake trailers to the *Grindhouse* film (Rob Zombie, Edgar Wright, Eli Roth), and not of the two major horror films from Tarantino and Rodriguez themselves, it all seems somewhat bizarre. Even the student bodies populating the uncomfortable seats in

film schools and the cinema studies departments in Universities are more likely to discuss *Reservoir Dogs, Kill Bill, El Mariachi, Inglourious Basterds,* and *Sin City* over the horror offerings from these former indie film icons. Eleven years after the theatrical release of *Grindhouse* and twenty-three years after the release of *From Dusk Till Dawn*, it could be time to reevaluate these films' positions in the rankings of Hollywood horror cinema – but if nothing else, they make a bloody fantastic double feature for late-nite horror aficionados.

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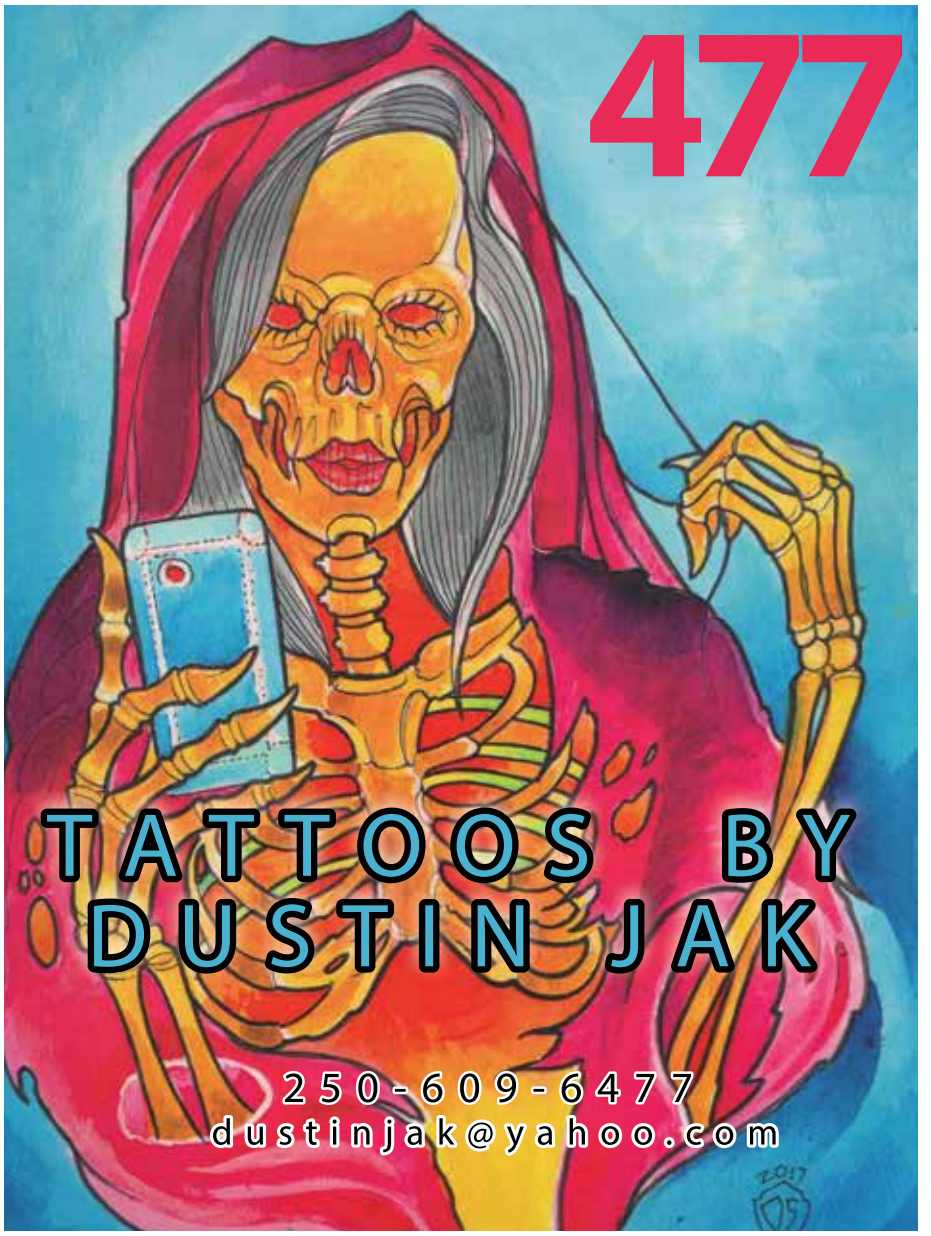

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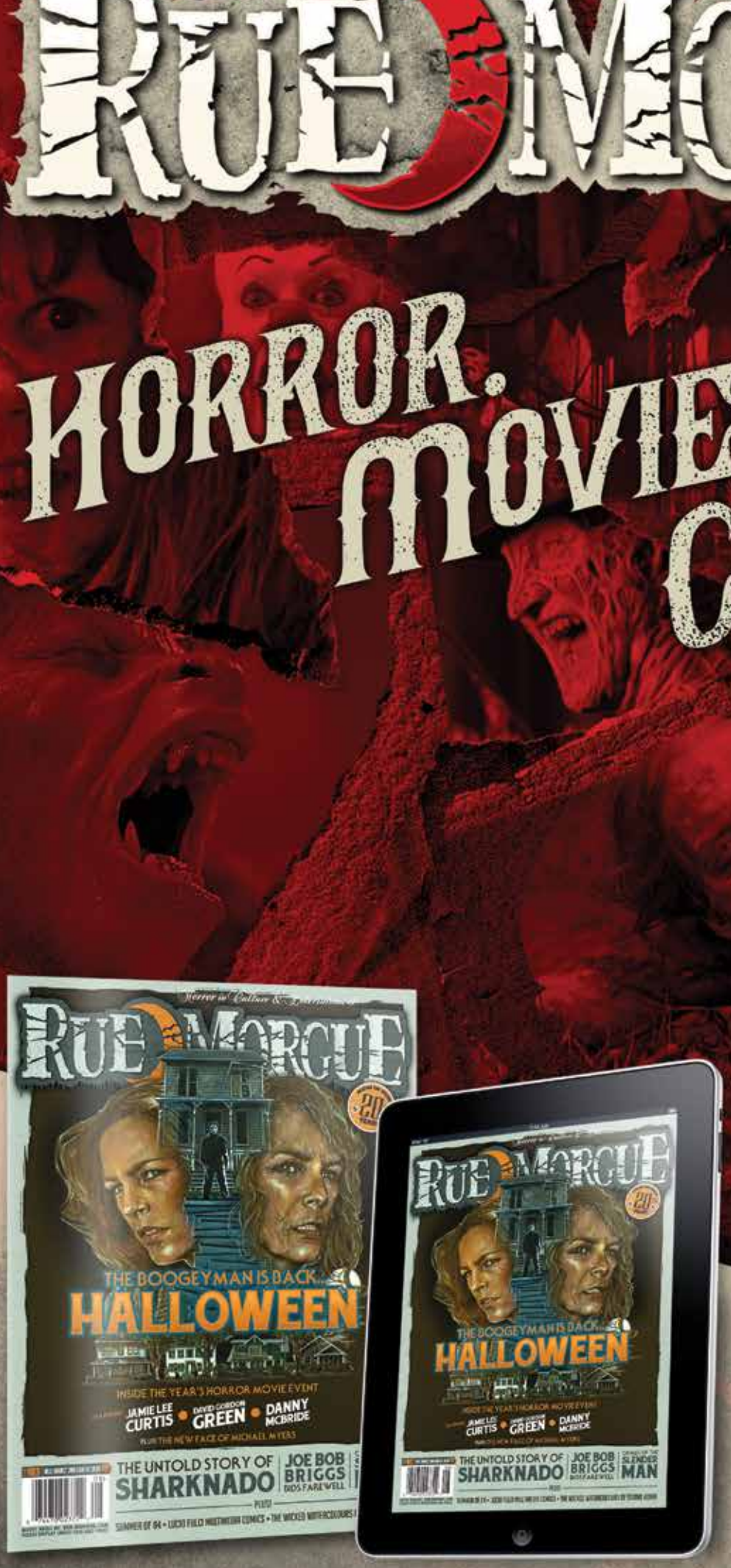

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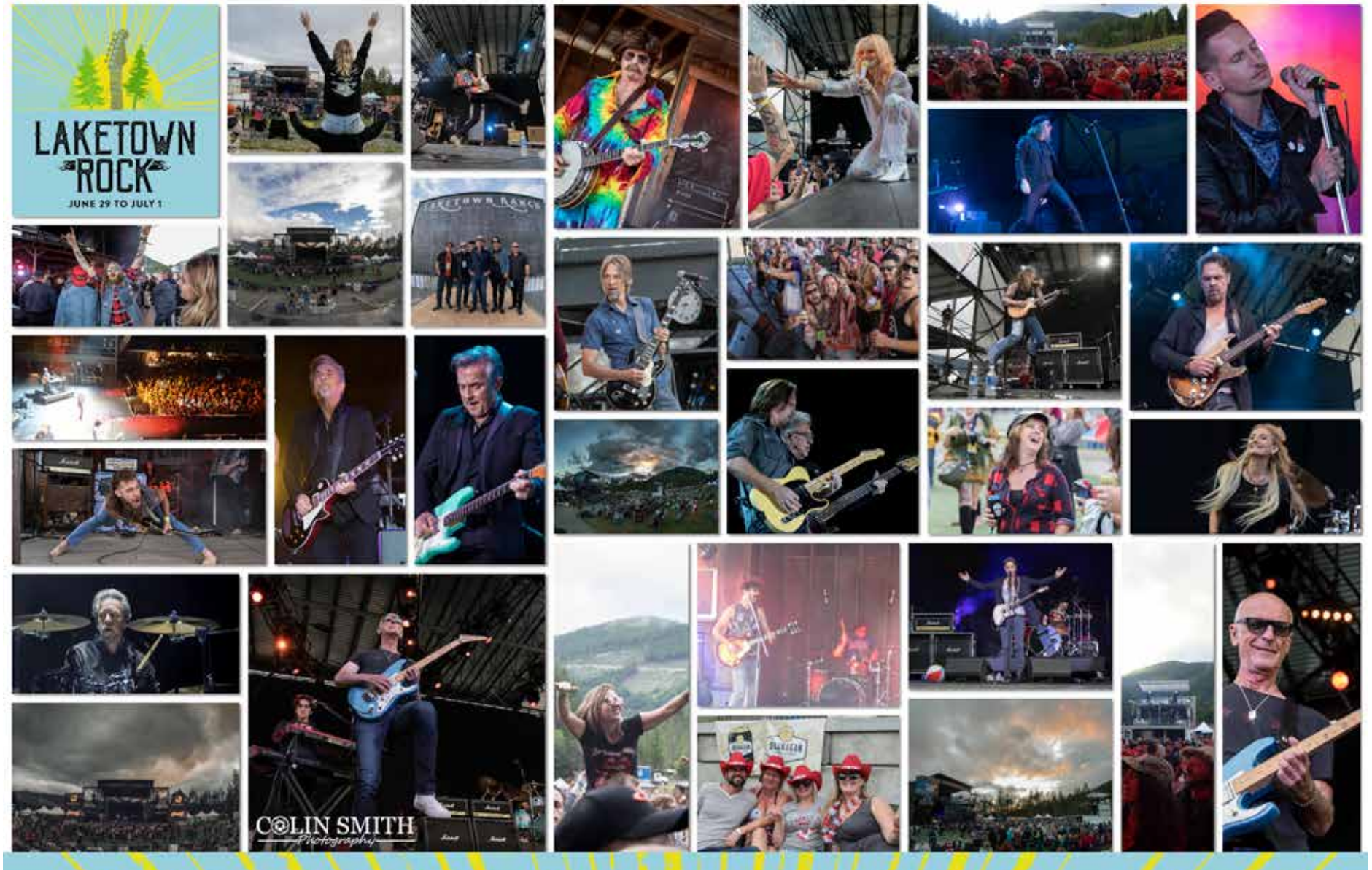

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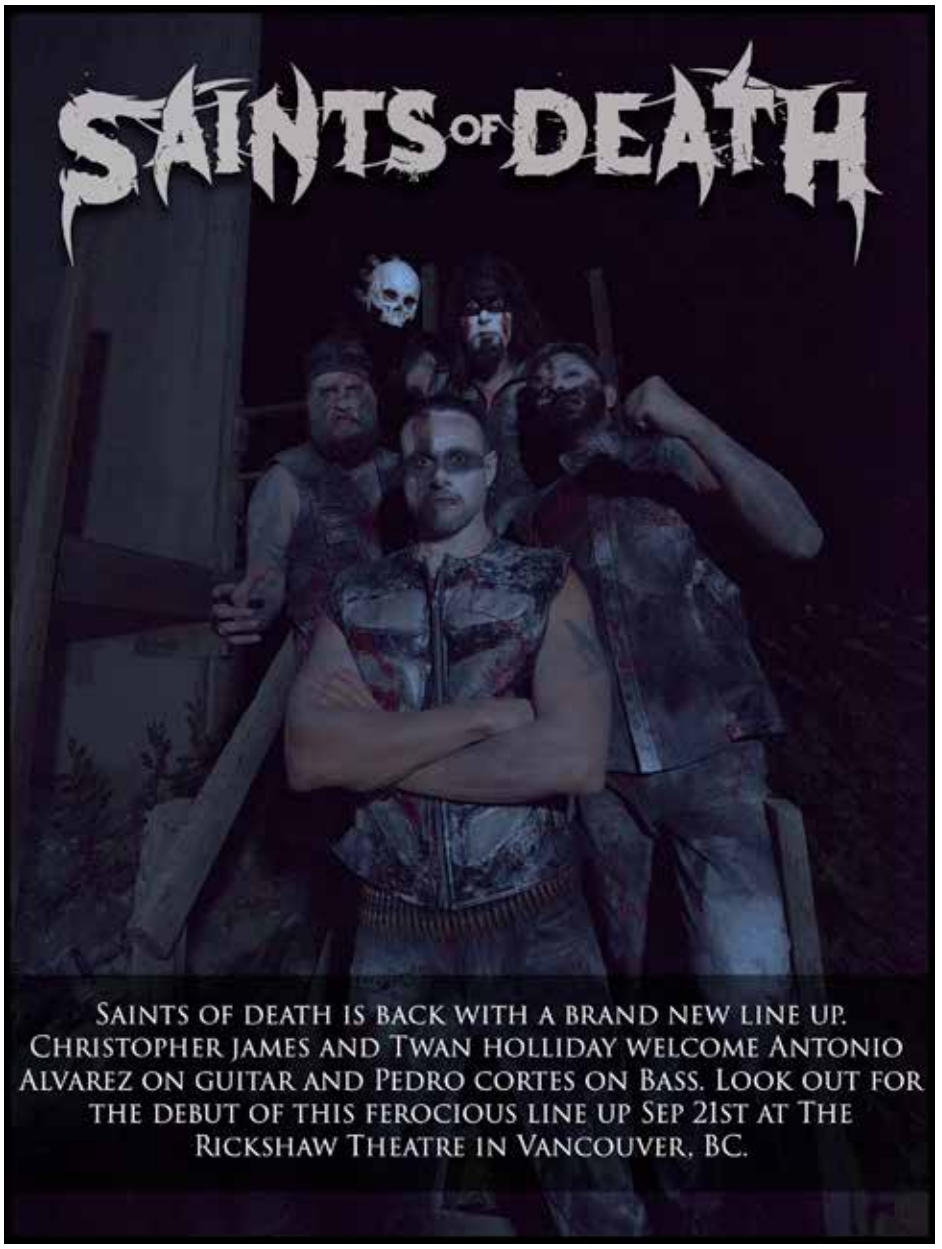

Dragonlord
Dominion

Interview with Eric Peterson
By Ira Hunter
Transcribed by Trevor Lawrence Reid

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?

Eric Peterson: This is Eric Peterson from Testament and Dragonlord. I'm known for being part of a blueprint of a genre called thrash metal. My band Testament along with Metallica, Slayer, Anthrax and Megadeth, Overkill, Exodus and Kreator, I guess you'd call us the forefathers of thrash. We started off this genre and it's gone from 10 bands to 10,000 thrash bands 30 years later. We're surprisingly still in demand and tour more now than we ever have.

AU: What were the early days of the thrash scene like?

EP: It was just a couple of clubs in the Bay Area, Ruthie's Inn and The Stone. Ruthie's Inn was in Berkeley, California. It was a little cocktail Inn that had a stage and the scene kind of took it over Everybody from Exodus, Death Angel, Forbidden, Testament, we were called Legacy back then, Possessed, Megadeth, Slayer, we all played there and also The Stone in San Francisco all the time. The drink of choice in Ruthie's was a Kamikaze. That's what we all drank at that place. [laughs]

AU: Tell us about your solo project, Dragonlord.

EP: Dragonlord started off in 2000, it was a side-project I did. I put out my first record in 2001 with Spitfire Records and it was more based on stuff like Merciful Fate, Venom, Angel Witch, and Celtic Frost. I did a record being influenced by a lot of those of bands and I didn't want to push that style into Testament. That was perfect cause then when I came back to Testament, I had more of a clear head on what Testament needed to sound like, which made those records super-heavy. *Low, Demonic, The Gathering*, those are some really good records and by doing something else, it really helped me to focus more and not try and incorporate this new ideology. I really got the flu bug of the black metal bite. [laughs]

Then Dragonlord did some local shows and festivals and in 2005, I put out *Black Wings Of Destiny* and I was a little more serious about it. This newer record, *Dominion*, is like 12 years later. I'm very happy with and I'm glad to say it's finally done. I started working on the record in 2012-13, with producer, Juan Urteaga who also works with like Machine Head, Testament, Vicious Rumors, Ted Nugent, and Night Ranger.

AU: You do vocals, guitar, and bass on the new album?

EP: On this record, yeah. This one was not so much a band, more of my own project. Lyle Livingston, the keyboard player and myself pretty much wrote all the music together. I ended up getting Alex Bent on drums which totally raised the bar. I also ended up getting LEAH, an artist from Vancouver to come in and do a duet with me.

AU: What are some of the songs about? I understand there's a *Lord Of The Rings*-themed song titled "The Discord of Melkor"?

EP: Yes, that's one of the last ones that took forever. The song is so crazy, it's like an eight-minute song. It had this one middle part where it breaks down to all orchestration. It just reminded me of the *Silmarillion*, about the first age of the *Lord Of The Rings*.

The song "Dominion" has a lot of weird things in it that are happening now. The whole thing of finding about, whether it's true or not, about this planet called Planet X which is appearing every now and then outside the milky way. It's a planet sometimes called "The Red Dragon" and it's prophesied to destroy the solar system or maybe Earth. I have a character called "The Burner" who is a Black Metal kind of character that comes to Earth on several occasions like how the [Ancient] Astronaut theories talk about how aliens came here and did their bit with humanity. We have songs referring to the comics, when he comes on different occasions and fights with the pagans against Christianity. Of course, back then, it was a lot like some religions are today where they are using brutality and force to get their point across the same way that the Christians did back then. You know like "You don't believe in our religion? DIE!"

The most surprising track to me was the collaboration with LEAH on a song called "The Love of The Damned," which is based around *Dante's Inferno*. How Beatrice gets taken to hell because of the lies that were created by her lover

and a bet with the Devil. In *Dante's Inferno*, she gets set free. In my story, she falls in love with the devil and stays there and sets it up for the end of the song, where LEAH explains why she's staying with the prince of darkness.

There's a lot of different themes and stuff but they all kind of tie-in together and each page has a graphic novel style of art to go along with it. The label was really cool to actually do a double gate-fold record where I can have the art big enough, so when you're listening to the record you can actually see some of the art that goes along with it.

AU: Does Dragonlord wear the corpse paint?

EP: It's off and on. In the video the corpse paint is on, in the lyrical video it's not. In some photos, we do it because it's just more ominous looking. It's definitely something we use but it kind of goes back and forth.

AU: How closely does the album follow *The Burner* comic book?

EP: The comic book is a whole different story. It's more about The Burner. Dragonlord is in the comic but it's more based on me writing music and there's a telepathy between me and The Burner. Somehow I'm channelling

his thoughts and think they are my ideas, but they're really his ideas so he seeks me out. He's a time-traveller, "Why am I brought back to this time and this place?" He ends up having a lot of memories of the past and it goes back and forth from one century to today's time. The comic ends on him finding me and then there's a question mark like what's going to happen next, setting it up for the next one. It's just an offbeat story but it involves Dragonlord and it uses some of the lyrics for story pieces.

AU: So you launched the comic at your signing at the Nuclear Blast booth at Comic-Con?

EP: That was a lot of fun. It's funny, I didn't really know about Comic-Con and the appearance was more of a Testament thing. It just so happened that I was working on a comic and really was a coincidence. The people I was working with were like, "It's perfect timing cause you're playing the Comic-Con!" I didn't know how big it was, I was just overwhelmed, like, "How cool is this?!" It's like NAMM but so much more fun.

AU: Who is the artist who worked on *The Burner* comic?

EP: There was a team from Chimp 9 who is Mel Smith, the creator of *Dead Ahead*. Hold on a second. Sorry, we're on Justin Bieber's recording bus and it's just not working out, it's more of a bus for recording and we're trying to figure out this new bus we're getting.

AU: Is Chuck Billy hot-boxing Justin Bieber's bus right now?

EP: [laughs] The Biebs! I was like, "Which bunk is his? I want to sleep on his bunk!" You know, musically I enjoy all kinds of stuff. Sorry metal fans! I don't think anyone from my band even knew who he was until later, when he started doing stupid shit and getting in the news, but I've seen his first record tour, second and third as well. I've even seen James Hetfield at one of the shows. He didn't want anyone to know, sorry, James! [laughs]

AU: Leave Justin a present, an "upper decker."

EP: Haha!

AU: Final words for Canadian fans?

EP: September 21st the new Dragonlord record gets released. If you're into metal and you like a really intricate style of music, this is a record that has been through it all and I think I got it right on this one. I'm very, very proud of it and can't wait for people to hear it. I have the title track "Dominion" out right now on iTunes or you can check out the lyrical video on YouTube. It's coming out from Spinefarm Records.

www.EnterTheDragonlord.com

Mick Foley

Interview by Andrew Roberts

Wrestler Mick Foley will be performing a one-man show in Victoria on Tuesday August 28th at Distrikt Nightclub, and in Nanaimo on Wednesday August 29th at The Queens. The tour is entitled "20 Years of Hell" and is based around his Hell In The Cell match with the Undertaker at the WWE (then WWF) pay-per-view - King of the Ring 1998.

Absolute Underground: You are the king of the "cheap pop" (mentioning the town's name you are in to get the crowd to cheer like crazy). What are some of the loudest & craziest towns you have wrestled in?

Mick Foley: I think every city with loud and crazy when the attitude era was at its peak. Shows were selling out – 15,000 seat buildings without a single match even announced. It was a great time to be in WWE, and fortunately fans from that era have passed their love down to their children – so that half of the people who talk to me about wrestling these days weren't even born when I was still in the ring on a regular basis. But before the attitude era, I remember the Sportatorium in Dallas, and the ECW arena in Philadelphia as being particularly passionate!

AU: Is there a piece of advice that someone gave you along the way that stuck with you throughout your career?

MF: The best advice I received was from my trainer Dominic DeNucci, who told me, "Don't think you were going to make a living doing this stuff." While I was fortunate that I was able to make a good living doing this stuff, I always had a back up plan – and spent the first two years of my wrestling career completing college.

AU: WWE Superstar Kevin Owens recently was thrown off the top of a steel cage and crashed through a table, reminiscent of one of your falls from the Hell In A Cell match 20 years ago. It was a crazy moment, but within a few weeks it seems to have been mostly forgotten about. What were your thoughts on the Kevin Owens' fall, and do you think anything that happens in wrestling now or in the future can have the same or greater impact than matches or moments from the past?

MF: I reached out to Kevin Owens and told him what an incredible job he had done – and he really appreciated it. I think I am really fortunate that there was no social media presence in 1998, or else my match with the Undertaker would've printed for a few days – maybe even a week – and then been largely forgotten. Instead, The excitement over the aftermath of that match was allowed to build organically – and to build for weeks, then months – and people are still talking about it 20 years after the fact.

AU: You've been retired from the ring for a while now. Besides being a multiple time NY Times best-selling author, you put a lot of time into charity work and creating awareness for many groups, notably R.A.I.N.N. - Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network which was co-founded by one of your favorite musicians - Tori Amos. Can you tell us a bit about what R.A.I.N.N. is all about and how you've been able to raise thousands for them via your Wrestlemania ticket contest?

MF: I am really proud of the fact that I was an active online hotline volunteer for two years for RAINN. I probably put too many hours in too quickly– and I did get burned out. But I thought I could raise awareness and money through a sweepstakes for a Wrestlemania dream vacation. I think we raised almost $400,000 in four years – and combined with a couple of other fundraisers we did, the wrestling community was able to raise over half a million dollars US total for a cause that not too many people were talking about the time.

AU: Do you have a story for us from your time wrestling anywhere in British Columbia?

MF: I think we only did one tour that took us outside Vancouver during my time with WWE. That's one of the reasons I really enjoy these tours of my own; I get to go pretty much anywhere I want to. I do remember a particularly feisty crowd in Vancouver – where it seemed like fans were being ejected at an extremely rapid pace.

AU: Victoria comedian Matt Basky sent in a question: "With character work being something of a lost art these days and you being the one of the all-time greats I'd be curious what current WWE characters you find most entertaining or think would have a good future?"

MF: I definitely enjoy the WWE superstars make a great commitment character development. I love what Matt Hardy has done recently with his character, and I really enjoy seeing him with Bray Wyatt. Becky Lynch is such an interesting character to me – and I feel like WWE has only scraped the surface of what she has to offer.

AU: One young fan from Nanaimo, Hudson Minifie, isn't old enough to come to your show but had a question to ask you: "What was your favourite match/rival?"

MF: My favorite match of all time took place in Edmonton in 2004 against Randy Orton. If this fan is not old enough to come to the show, they probably should not be watching the match! But my favorite rival of all time was The Undertaker. Without The Undertaker putting me on the map in 1996, there would've been no famous 1998 match that I would be talking about 20 years after the fact.

AU: One final question to you Mick. We know wrestling fans are excited for the show but what about non-wrestling fans? Will your show be entertaining for them?

MF: I go out of my way to make sure my shows are entertaining for non-fans as well as wrestling fans. While it is certainly a show geared towards wrestling fans – after all, it is an entire show based around one match that took place 20 years ago – I do make it as inclusive as possible for non-fans. I only curse once in my two hours on stage, and I think that's pretty commendable – since many performers use three or four F-bombs in their first minute on stage. Are usually find a couple of fans in the audience were there with a boyfriend or husband – and I watch as they develop big smiles and realize they're having a much better time than they planned on.

AU: Really appreciate you taking part in this interview Mick, and we can't wait to see your show in Victoria and Nanaimo coming up soon!

Tickets are still available and you can get yours by visiting realmickfoley.com

Andrew Roberts is the owner of 'Got Pop? Concerts', a Vancouver Island based event promotion company. Over the last fourteen years he has brought such acts to Victoria & Nanaimo as Jon Lovitz, Marianas Trench, Steve-O, Bob Saget, Mick Foley, The Trews, Big Sugar & many others. A wrestling fan since the age of five after seeing Macho Man Randy Savage, Andre The Giant & others on Saturday Night's Main Event which his father recorded for him on VHS and regretted soon after.

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DEE SNIDER
For the Love of Metal

interview by Ira "Burn in Hell" Hunter

Absolute underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Dee Snider: Dee Snider, I guess I'm most infamous for being Mister We're Not Gonna Take It in Twisted Sister.

AU: Yeah I got see Twisted Sister's Forty and Fuck It tour at Hellfest a few years ago.

DS: Yeah, that was a fond farewell to a very proud time in my life but I realized to start anew or move forward, you gotta put an end to the past. I'm proud of the past but I've always been more focused on what I'm currently involved in and working on.

AU: Awesome. I also got to see your solo thing at the Riot Fest.

DS: Well my solo thing has evolved considerably. My new album is pretty much the number one metal album in the world and number 20 on the Billboard charts. I've haven't been on the charts in over 30 years so it's pretty exciting and I've definitely returned to a contemporary metal sound.

AU: What made you want to originally start a band?

DS: The Beatles appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1964. Although I didn't see it myself because my father banned television in our home. The excitement the next day at the bus stop. Everybody was just going crazy. I was like eight years old and I said "What's going on?". And they said "Oh man, it was the Beatles rock band. Everybody was screaming." Being an attention hog, I said "That's what I've got to do. I've got to be a rock band."

AU: What was the inspiration for the look and sound of Twisted Sister?

DS: It was born out of the glitter era of the early 70s. The original band formed in 1973 as a result of bands like The New York Dolls, David Bowie, and Alice Cooper and what they called glitter bands. When I joined in 76 I was a fan of glitter rock but also fan of heavy metal. So as a songwriter I sort of merged my love of heavy metal with my love of early 70s glitter rock.

AU: It was very interesting that the Twisted Sister documentary "We Are Twisted Fucking Sister" was all about the early years of the band but never covered the years when you actually got famous and popular. Will there be a part two?

DS: I don't think so. The impetus for the documentary was an independent documentarian who heard our story and said "I had no idea about this, this is kind of incredible that the band was together for ten years before it made it". Everybody kind of knows the VH1 Behind The Music story. It's really pretty standard once we made it, fame, fortune, cars, houses, women, fights, band breaks up, band loses everything, band reforms. It's all pretty standard stuff. The story beforehand changes people's perception of Twisted Sister. It's a Rocky-esque inspirational story, even if you're not a fan of the band, it's a never give up kind of story

AU: So after the final tour with Twisted Sister, what made you want to continue to perform solo?

DS: I wasn't planning on continuing, at least not musically. I thought I was done but I was challenged by a pop producer to make a mainstream rock record. I'm always up for a challenge, so many things I've done in my life have been challenges, like being on Broadway. I never had aspirations and they were like "Would you be interested in being in the show, Rock of Ages?" and I was like "Sure". That was a challenge. So I was like OK I'll do a contemporary mainstream rock record. So We Are The Ones was done but then it didn't go anywhere so I was like alright, did that. Moving on." I've got a lot of other

projects going on that are non-musical. And then Jamey Jasta of Hatebreed challenged me on his podcast to do a contemporary metal album. And I said "Let's do it!" and this project is turning out to be quite successful.

AU: Tell us more about your latest solo album For The Love Of Metal.

DS: I've been metalhead my whole life and continue to be a metal fan. Once a metalhead, always a metalhead. That's what Rob Halford said and it's true. I enjoyed the article about the two nursing home patients who escaped to go to the Wacken heavy metal festival. It doesn't go away, you're always a metalhead. So I love the new metal stuff but I just felt that I couldn't create it on my own. When I tried to write contemporary I was imitating, it wasn't genuine. So when Jamey approached me I said "Well, who's going to write these songs?" and Jamey said "Everybody is going to want to write for Dee Snider." And when we started doing the record people from Lamb of God, Killswitch Engage, Disturbed, Toxic Holocaust, so many of the great contemporary metal bands started coming and joining us in the studio and saying "Yeah, we want to work with Dee Snider, you're an icon. So what you've got is my iconic voice with a very contemporary sound that's still very rooted in the past.

AU: Any themes or standout tracks on the new record?

DS: That's one of the things people are saying "You put the record on and you can't take it off". For myself I am just so pleased with the results and one of the things I really wanted to talk about this with this record is bullying. I really felt I needed to lend my voice to the anti-bullying campaigns out there and I wanted to have a couple of songs that really spoke to that. So Become The Storm and a song called Dead Hearts (Love Thy Enemy), which I duet with a Canadian woman named Alissa Gluz-White from Arch Enemy, these two songs are specifically about bullying and anti-bullying.

AU: I liked your horror movie Strangeland. Any plans to write more horror movies?

DS: I have multiple horror films in different stages of development, so you're going to see some major things coming from Dee Snider. A Strangeland sequel, that's been on and off forever. I'm in a total re-write stage on that one right now. I've also written a new horror film that is going to be a game changer and that one is something we're raising money right now. Plus I've got a couple other horror projects, so you will see a lot more from Dee Snider in the world of horror.

AU: Will you be working with horror director Adam Green? I know you were a big inspiration to him.

DS: Yes. Adam Green is a dear friend. He's a great director and writer in the horror world. Actually one of our projects is an episodic horror film with multiple episodes within it and we've asked Adam to write and direct one of those episodes.

AU: What do you think the future of Heavy Metal is?

DS: As a true fan of Metal and one who has actively been a part of the Metal scene and followed it through my kids, my kids are all metalheads, and they've kept me connected over the years. There are those who've said "Metal is dead" and I go "You're obviously not intuned because it is alive and well". You see the talent of these young metal bands and the passion of the fans. That's one of the great things about For The Love Of Metal, people are feeling that somehow I've shined a light on contemporary metal and that I'm holding the torch saying Metal is alive, well, and thriving.

AU: Any plans to tour Canada?

DS: I definitely expect to be doing more and more shows with the solo band and I expect to be in Canada. This has completely blindsided me. I was not expecting to have such a successful record because when we did this record we didn't even have a record deal.

AU: Do you think there will be a 50th anniversary reunion tour for Twisted Sister?

DS: Definitely not. I've got a real problem with bands that retire and then come back. I think it's bullshit. It's not that I think you have to retire. KISS, Ozzy, Scorpions, stay as long as you like but if you announce your retirement and you sell the no more tours T-shirt, you got to go, that's the rules. Twisted Sister, we announced that we were retiring and we are retired.

AU: You were on Adam Green's TV show Holliston. Did you get to work with GWAR's Dave Brockie at all?

DS: Yes I did. What a pleasure. What a smart, bright, funny, just an incredible guy. It's so sad to have lost him in that way. It just speaks to the inner demons and the inner sorrows that so many of us have. He was such a great guy and I'm glad that Holliston brought us together and it was a pleasure.

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Social Distortion

Interview with drummer David Hidalgo Jr.

By Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?

David Hidalgo Jr.: I'm David Hidalgo. I'm from Social Distortion, drummer - that's the most recent.

AU: We were just talking about Suicidal Tendencies.

David: Yeah, did that for a good amount of time. Went all over the world with those guys. Those guys taught me tons about touring and playing live in front of big crowds. It was awesome.

AU: I can think hanging out with Mike Muir would be inspirational for anyone.

David: Yeah, definitely.

AU: Seems like a really positive guy. Explain what just happened here. Where are we and what's going on?

David: We're at Rock The Shores in Victoria, BC, and Social Distortion just closed out day two of a three day festival. It was awesome.

AU: For people that missed the show. What did they miss?

David: A high energy set, lots of good favourites, and good times.

AU: Any other bands of note that you've been in?

David: Suicidal Tendencies, I played in a band called Spinnerette with Brody Dalle from The Distillers. I've also played in The Bronx, Mariachi El Bronx, and the list goes on.

AU: It's quite the pedigree actually. How did you get hooked up with Mike Ness, and Social Distortion?

David: I got an audition and made it.

AU: So you're getting in the bus and where are you going next?

David: We're going to Sacramento, finishing up an eight week tour.

AU: Have you been on the last couple of Social D records?

David: No, I haven't. I have been in the band eight years now, and last record came out about that time before I joined.

AU: Anything in the works for a new record?

David: Yeah, got a lot of new songs and getting ready to get them going. Get going, and get it done!

AU: Final words for Canadian fans?

David: Keep it up. Your open mindedness to all music, and your awesome attitude at shows. It's a real pleasure for us to come up and play for you.

Interview with guitarist Jonny "2 Bags" Wickersham

AU: The legendary Jonny 2 Bags!

Jonny: How are you?

AU: I found you! You were in Youth Brigade, Cadillac Tramps, and now Social Distortion. Can you talk to to me here for a few minutes for this Canadian publication?

Jonny: I was in Youth Brigade, I did this record with them *To Sell the Truth* and that was an awesome time in my life, and I'm really proud of this record, and I love the Sterns.

AU: It was the three brothers, and you. How did you get into that?

Jonny: It was right after my band The Cadillac Tramps disbanded and they just offered me a gig. They wanted to add a second guitar player, so there it was. Three Gemini brothers, and me - another Gemini. Four Geminis out there on the road together, it was a blast.

AU: Have you been to Punk Rock Bowling?

Jonny: I have! I've played it a couple of times with different bands.

AU: What bands?

Jonny: The Cadillac Tramps have played it a couple of times, and I did a solo thing a couple of years ago

AU: How did you get hooked up with Social Distortion?

Jonny: When Mike decided that he wanted to keep the band going after Dennis Danell passed away he gave me a call and asked if I wanted to do it. I've known these guys since I was a kid, and I've known Mike forever. He just gave me a call, and I have actually filled in for Dennis in Europe. He came home, his son Duke was due to be born and he told them not to have him on the road during this month and of course he was in Europe. So they flew me out and I filled in for a couple of weeks so that he could be there for that.

AU: How did you get the nickname Jonny 2 Bags? There must be a story.

Jonny: Ah man, it involves kind of a dark past. This one time I was getting into a lot of trouble, in my younger days, kind of living like an orphan on the streets.

AU: But you've risen like a phoenix out of the ashes?

Jonny: Haha, yeah.

AU: There are also a bunch of songs written about you. A Vandals song, I want to say there is a NOFX song, a Bouncing Souls song where they all mention Johnny X, and Jonny 2 Bags. Is it all you?

Jonny: Johnny X is a friend of The Souls, from New Jersey that they grew up with. NOFX might mention my name in a song, but they don't have a song.

AU: The Vandals do.

Jonny: They sure do. They have that song "Jonny 2 Bags."

AU: And you don't have the blues?

Jonny: Well, apparently not.

AU: How do you describe your experience today at the Rock The Shores festival?

Jonny: This was amazing. I love coming to Victoria. I've been over here in the past, playing Harpos usually. I remember the Cadillac Tramps playing there with Green Day, I think we also played there with DOA back in the day.

AU: Did you get to explore Victoria at all this time around?

Jonny: Today I took off on my bicycle from here, and I went all over the place. I went down all these trails on a mountain bike and it was just amazing. I could have stayed there forever. I found this garden over by that big castle. Just awesome, I love it. I didn't want to come back and do the show, I just wanted to hang out. It's really crazy, you guys are very fortunate to live around here.

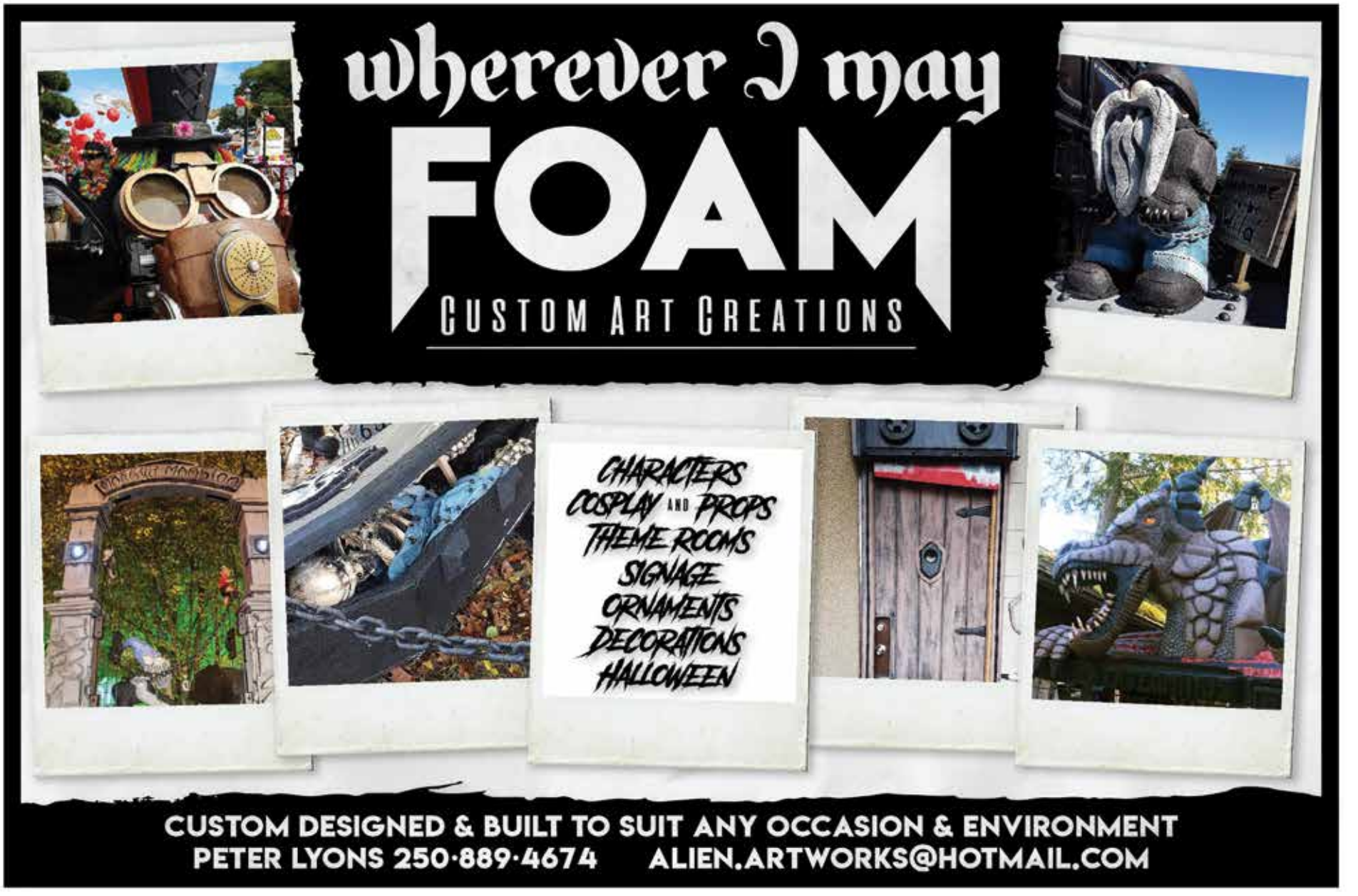
AU: Do you think Social Distortion will put out a new record soon?

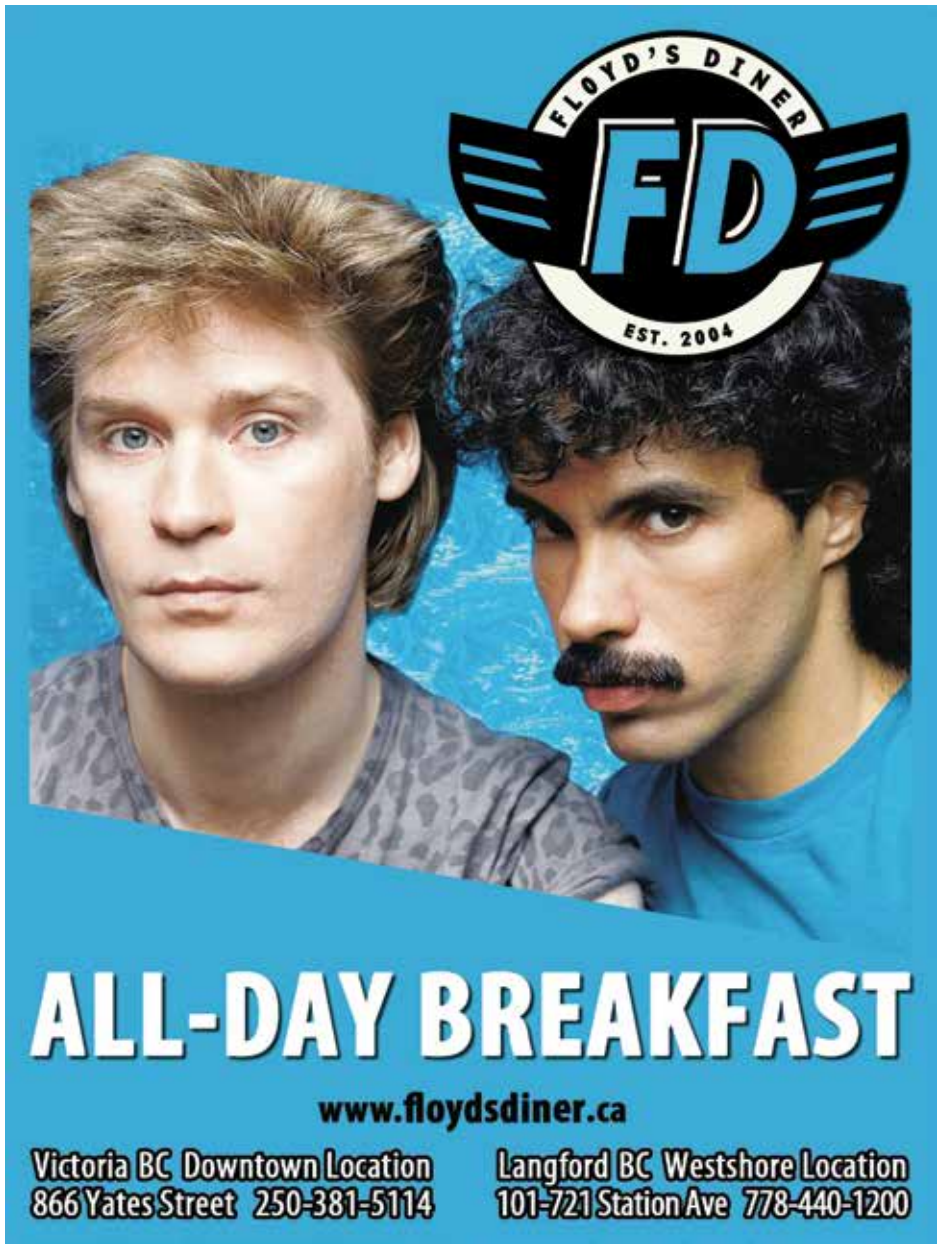
Jonny: Absolutely! We've got a bunch of new stuff and we're going to go demo. Not after this tour, but we have another tour coming up and we will get in the studio and do some demos and get working on the new record.

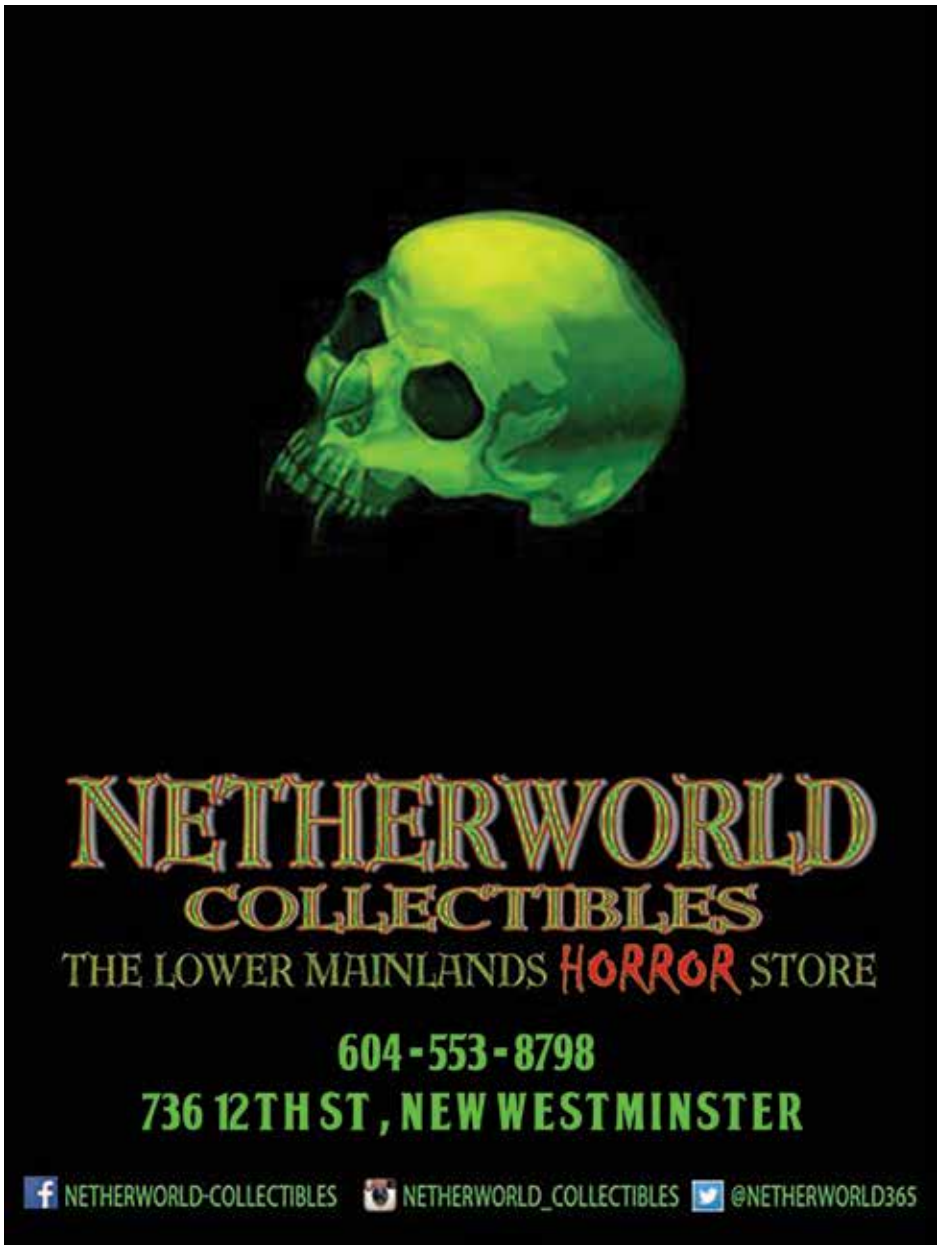
AU: Final words for Canadian fans?

Jonny: Thanks a lot for coming out and being great. Love you guys!

www.socialdistortion.com/







DORO

Forever Warriors, Forever United

Interview by Ira Hunter and Mika Marauder

Absolute Underground: Good morning Doro, how are you?

Doro: Very good. We're just preparing for Wacken in four days, we're going to play two shows. We're playing a couple of new songs there, and Johan Hegg of Amon Amarth will be a special guest. I'm a metalhead through and through and I like rocking out like there is no tomorrow!

AU: How did you first get involved with your first band, Warlock?

D: I had a couple of bands before, my first band was called Snakebite! Then Beast, then Attack, and then Warlock. And it was in 1982 and we were in the right place at the right time, it was just beginning when metal was getting bigger and bigger. We recorded our first record, *Burning the Witches*, for Mausoleum Records. We had no expectations but then in the first month, it sold unbelievably and we were totally shocked and surprised. Then I came to America in '86 and then we got to record *Triumph and Agony*, which was a big success worldwide.

AU: Did Gene Simmons have something to do with your success?

D: In 1990 I was working with Gene Simmons and it was awesome. I was a big KISS fan growing up, so you can imagine it was a dream come true! Gene was definitely a big inspiration, influence and fantastic producer.

AU: Can you tell us about some of the duets you've performed?

D: The new duet, "If I Can't Have You, No One Will!" the single and the video just came out and it's a duet with Johan Hegg of Amon Amarth. It's a brutal love story, pretty heavy, very dark.

My first duet was with Lemmy Kilmister, in 2000 and we did two songs, "Alone Again" and "Love Me Forever," a Motorhead classic. I loved Lemmy so much, my best friend in the business. Lemmy and Ronnie James Dio. I did a duet with Pete Steele from Type O Negative. Then I did many many duets with Udo Dirkschneider.

AU: Let's talk about your new album.

D: It's called *Forever Warriors, Forever United*. We have three singles out, the first one is "All for Metal," it's a big anthem. Everybody's singing on it, from Mille of Kreator, Johan Hegg, Ross The Boss, Sabaton, Jeff Waters, and Warrel Dane. The second single was "Lift Me Up," it's a very melodic song with very uplifting positive lyrics.

The record has 25 songs, on two discs; it's a mix of lots of anthems, very heavy songs, very soulful songs and some personal songs as well. The song: "Living Life to the Fullest," that was written for Lemmy. We have one cover version of a Motorhead song on this album, it's "Lost in the Ozone." There are also six bonus tracks, one's called "Metal Is My Alcohol," it's a fun Wacken metal punk song, there's another song called: "Bring My Hero Back Home Again," that will be in a movie.

AU: Have you done many songs for movies?

D: I did three movies for a director from Switzerland, his name is Luke Gasser. For the first film, *Anuk*, he asked if I would write the title track and I said, "Yes," and then he said,"Would you like to play someone in the movie as well?" And I said, "Oh, this would be nice." So my character is like a female warrior and her name is Meha. Our first movie was called *Anuk - The Path of the Warrior*. Now we did three movies and the newer one is called *Anuk – Die Dunkle Flut*.

AU: What is the secret to your longevity?

D: I love the music and I love the fans, nothing makes me happier than being on tour, being on stage, making music and it's what I've always wanted. I'm very grateful that I can still do it. It's something that's inspired me. I was about 24 when I thought: "Yeah, I want to dedicate my life to metal and to the fans," that's many years ago. And since I then I have thought that was the right decision. I never did regret it.

AU: Will you be touring Canada?

D: Yes, next year. When this album comes out we are planning a big tour worldwide. I don't know which songs we will play on the set list because now there are 25 new songs, we already have 19 records.

AU: Has the Heavy Metal demographic changed since the 80s?

D: When I started in the early 80s it was 90% guys and now it's pretty balanced, sometimes it's 50/50. Even the bands, now there are many female musicians and in the 80s it was just a handful.

AU: Can you explain how you are a vegan and use artificial leather?

D: It started about ten years ago. I was always wearing leather. Then I got an education, I found out it was really cruel. The more I knew about it the more I thought, I have to find an alternative. The stuff I have on looks like leather but it's all artificial. I was for many years vegetarian, and now I turned vegan.

AU: Final words for Canadian fans?

D: I'm so excited to come there very soon! I hope thr fans like the record. We're grateful, rocking in every city, and metal is in such good shape.

Thank you for all the support and all the great years. The fans are my life, they always will be, they're the most important thing in my world. I wish everybody the best! Stay healthy, stay happy, stay metal!

Photo Credit David Havlena

www.doromusic.de

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Mantar

Interview by Erik Lindholm

Absolute Underground: Hello sir! How are you, and where are you at this time?

Hanno Klänhard: I am good. Sitting in my former hometown Bremen, Germany and trying to hide from the sun, because for some weird reason we have the craziest heat wave ever in Northern Germany.

AU: What is the band up to at this moment? What are you working on?

HK: We are about to release our new record end of August. So we are quite busy doing interviews, shooting videos and most of all playing a shit ton of summer festivals all over Europe. Summer usually is a very busy time for us. I can't wait until the album is out and I can go back home to Florida, where I've lived for the last few years, relax a bit, and than kick off a long Europe Tour with our buddies from Skeletonwitch.

AU: Tell us about the new release you have coming up, *The Modern Art Of Setting Ablaze*? Can you explain the themes running through the record?

HK: The title refers to fire in the heads of the people, and the ones who set the minds of man on fire. The title expresses how easy it is even nowadays to control and manipulate the masses. You know, we live in crazy times. The overall mood in Europe, just as in America, is embittered. People, for some weird ass reason, start to follow assumed strong leaders again and fall for false prophets again. They refuse to think for themselves. They'd rather hide in the hate of the masses for everything that is different than their own little sad world and therefore scares them. History seems to repeat itself and this just seems to be the beginning. I think that is scary as fuck. Don't get me wrong, we are not necessarily a politically motivated band, we work on another level, it's more a morbid fascination about how stupid people are. I don't really judge, I just watch, point the finger, and report. The overall stupidity of mankind is a never-ending source of inspiration. Sad as fuck, but unfortunately real. People just don't wanna learn.

AU: It was a powerful choice to use for cover art "Der Lichtbringer," a sculpture piece on the rise of the Third Reich from 1936. You had a intelligent and intellectual explanation on your site, and I can only hope people take the time to read it.

HK: Yeah, you know, it is an explanation. Not an excuse. When people ask, which I think is legit, then you should be able to explain yourself and your intention. I did that, and people understood and we pretty much had nothing but support. Of course, it's an uncomfortable choice, but so are our times, so it all makes sense. Furthermore, metal, or any sort of "extreme" music should be uncomfortable, and best case scenario should be free to do whatever and make you think. I just thought no piece of art would point out and underline my intention or "message" better than "Der Lichtbringer." It stands for the manipulation of the masses. It´s majestic, quiet and dangerous as fuck.

AU: You've gained a great reputation of performing live as a two-piece; guitars and drums. How do you fill out the bass frequencies when you play live?

HK: It's no rocket science. I mainly try to play as many amplifiers at the time as possible, plus I also use bass amplifiers among the guitar heads to cover the low frequencies. Plus a few pedals to split the signal and distort the shit out of it. Also I always try to play LOUD. Our music needs that. You could say that volume is the third member of this band. We try to keep things simple. We pretty much record with the same setup that we also use live, no tricks, no magic gimmicks.

AU: What has been the most surprising thing about playing live music in Canada?

HK: How much the people liked it, haha. It's always cool, when you play a new country for the first time and the response is positive. Makes you wanna come back, which we have to do ASAP. I like Canada a lot, it reminds me of the relationship between Germany and our neighbours in Switzerland. Whenever you cross the border, you are amazed how easy and good some things seem to run. I guess that´s how a lot of Americans feel too, haha.

AU: We saw you at the Modified Ghost Festival in Vancouver – how was it play on the festival? What was your favourite thing about Vancouver?

HK: The drugs! Man, I have never seen so many drugged-out people on the streets like in Vancouver. It was like an episode of *Walking Dead*. But no, of course that wasn't my favourite thing, just something I've noticed. I just liked the city. It's a seaport city and reminds us, coming from northern Germany, of home. We are sea people... We had two fun days there and the festival itself was pretty awesome as well. The venue was super nice, hopefully we can play again one day.

AU: The band recorded in Gainsville, Florida, rather than hometown Germany. What prompted to record there, and what did being based in that area bring to the record?

HK: I've lived in Gainesville for the last three or four years now, and due to the fact we tour so freaking much, I really wanted to record "at home," or at least in Gainesville, in order not to be gone from home again for so long. You know, as a touring musician, your days at home are rare. And I need a lot of time for myself, so recording in FL was the way to go. We met in Germany for a few weeks before though, in order to write or at least arrange the songs, and then we flew over and recorded that thing, quick and dirty. Florida itself doesn't have much of an impact on the sound. I am in my own world and mindset whenever I write or create music, and everything around me turns black, no matter where I might be at that time. In rainy Germany, on tour in Japan or Russia, or in Florida on my sunny porch chilling with the alligators.

AU: One key musical recording for you right now – what is a song or album burning in your brain/on your playlist?

HK: Falco – *Junge Roemer*

AU: Final message to Canadians reading this piece of newspaper:

HK: I know most of you guys might not have heard about mighty Mantar yet... Change that! It will make your life better and you can impress you friends and enemies with playing tunes of this German/Turkish two-man army. Get the new record and rage. Hopefully see you guys soon!

https://mantar.bandcamp.com/
www.facebook.com/MantarBand/

PHOTO CREDIT: Christoph Eisenmenger

Zeke

Interview with "Blind" Marky Felchtone

By Dustin Jak

Absolute Underground: It's been over a decade since the last LP... What has changed in the music scene since you took a break?

Blind Marky Felchtone: I'm insular. It takes a lot to get me out to shows. Interestingly, these kids are all starting thrash metal bands here, which is hilarious and stupid and perfectly valid and more fun than regurgitating the same '77 style punk rock crap that every 26-year-old person around feels they've magically come across all on their own. I guess you picked the wrong person to ask, haha!

AU: You guys have been around as long as grunge... What is the key to outlasting all of that?

BMF: Outlasting... I'm afraid we have a couple shows coming up in Europe with Mudhoney... apparently the key to outlasting grunge was getting off heroin in '99.

AU: You guys are constantly being described as a punk band, yet you have been on notorious metal label Relapse for quite a while now... How do you label Zeke in 2018?

BMF: I always thought Zeke was a high energy rock and roll band like Motorhead or something. I grew up with a lot of Priest and Maiden. Not a lot of punk rock available in Fayetteville, Arkansas. So I had a girlfriend who grew up in the D.C. punk scene who might be a little bit responsible for me writing this music, haha! She turned me on to Minor Threat, Gun Club, Bad Brains. I was a kid. It really turned me around. In 2000, someone said, "I love your band. I hate metal," I was like, "Fuck that," and wrote *Death Alley* in two weeks. That's when we were contacted by Relapse.

AU: What were musical influences when the band first started out?

BMF: I mentioned a few. It would probably cause confusion, but, okay: early KISS, Black Sabbath, Ted Nugent, ZZ top, Charlie Daniels band. Obviously, it's taken way over the top with regards to speed.

AU: What are bands you guys listen to today for inspiration?

BMF: Well. It just comes out in the van: classic rock shit, Annihilation Time, DOOM, Disrupt, various early metal stuff, I don't know... we are all over the map, haha! Country music, horrible shit, old blues, R&B.

AU: What bands do you guys really like to share bills or tour with? Are there any new bands you guys listen to?

BMF: We just played in Gothenburg with Skitsystem. That was a high point.

AU: Growing up in the Pacific Northwest. what were metal and punk bands you followed?

BMF: You'd have to ask Kurt or Dayne or some of the guys who played with me early on from here. I love Poison Idea, Tragedy. All my friends' bands around here; Supersuckers, Gas Huffer, Derelicts, you know...

AU: The new album is pretty fuckin' solid… Who are the new members and what bands were they in? Why does the bassist look so familiar?

BMF: That was 8....Yeah, Kurt's been around forever, he's the bass player on the early 7" singles and some of *Flatracker*. Kyle was in the Hookers and Dayne was in the Mentors.

AU: There is song that is almost two minutes long on your new LP... How is this LP different from the others? Do you guys pitch in on the songs?

BMF: This record was completely rewritten in a very short period of time. Mostly by me, I guess. Kurt wrote two songs. Me and Kurt wrote another, and Kyle, Kurt, and myself wrote 'Devil's Night.' Kurt sings on his tunes and 'Working Man' is the one he and I wrote together.

AU: What are some shows on the *Hellbender* tour you guys are looking forward to? Festivals?

BMF: Looking forward to Finland in November. I love Weedeater. So that's coming up.

AU: You guys seem addicted to high speed bikes or hot rod cars.... Do you guys still own vehicles or bikes to fuck around on when you aren't on tour?

BMF: Kurt just bought a 383 Dart. I've been riding motorcycles with my daughter...

AU: Everyone was upset when we lost Lemmy... I can't imagine what you guys must have went through... Are you guys ready to keep carrying that torch?

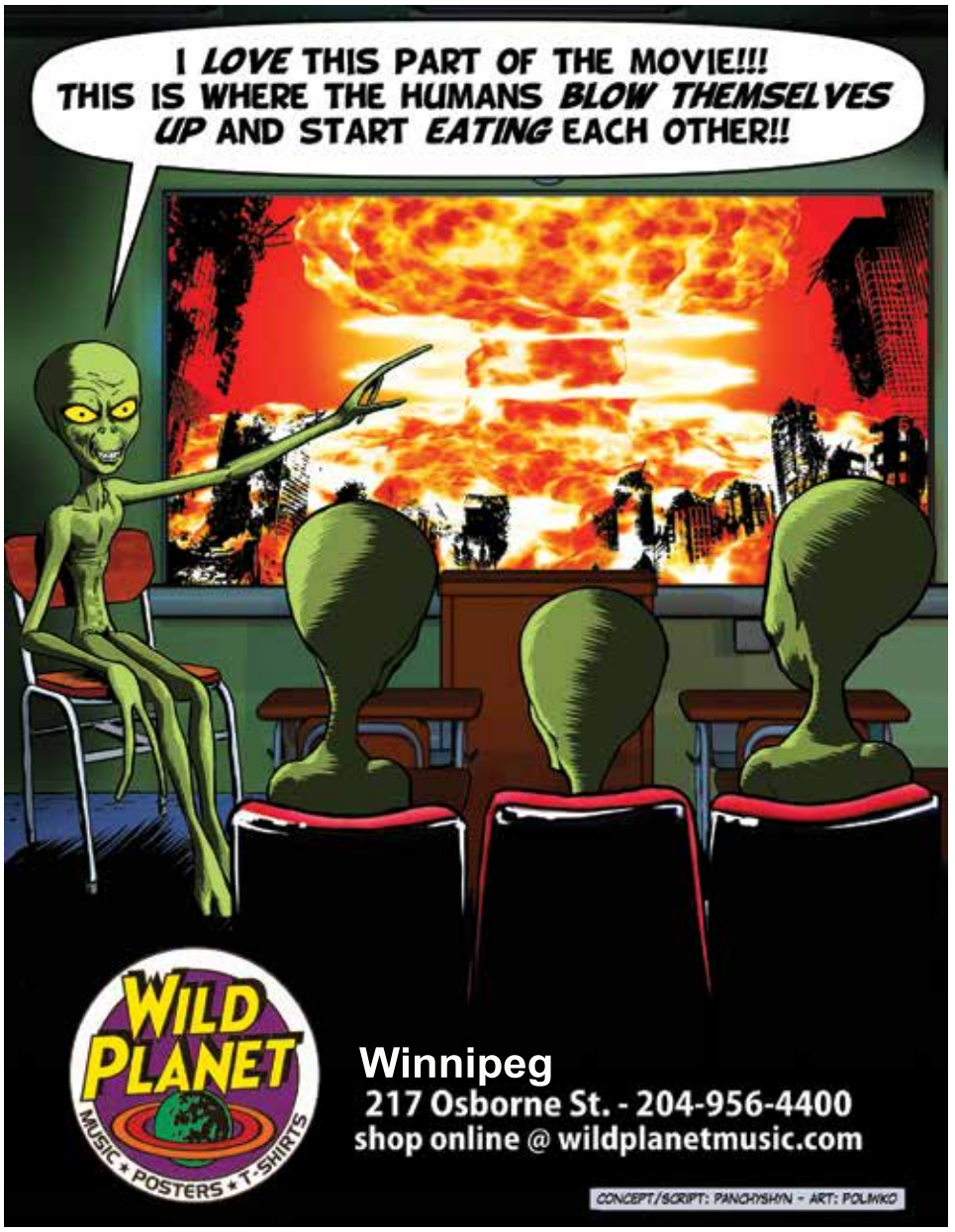
BMF: The way we all look at it.... You have been for a while now anyway. He was a great dude. He was so good with my kid. A really smart guy. I stole a lot from him, I guess, haha!

AU: When can we expect you guys in Canada? Is that a possibility in this day of tight-ass border crossings?

BMF: We're all felons. God help us.

Editors' Note: Zeke did not, in fact, make it across the border this time. Here's hoping for the future!

https://www.zekeband.com/



Ripcordz

Interview with Paul Gott

By Jason Lamb

Absolute Underground: When was the last time you were in Victoria?

Paul Gott: I do believe it was 2007. It was our Last Spike tour, and people kept on saying, "This is your last tour! You're calling it the Last Spike tour," and I was like, "This is not our last tour," but it kind of did turn into our last big west coast tour. Which is terrible, because we enjoyed it so much. It gave us our summer vacation.

AU: And I guess you're coming at almost the start of summer this time around.

PG: I teach, so it's between spring and summer courses.

AU: You're two years away from your 40th anniversary. Is that accurate?

PG: Formed it in 1980, and at that time I thought I was too old to form a punk band. Who would have figured! It's still fun, it's still a great time. We still record songs, we haven't turned into a Ripcordz cover band. We still put out albums, and I like our new albums more than our old albums so that's kind of the important thing. It's kind of like it was in the 80s, but better because people actually come to our shows.

AU: You started in the 1980s, but you didn't put a release out for eight years. Why so long?

PG: For one thing, we started off really slow, playing parties and basements. I think we played three club shows in the first six years. There weren't a lot of punk clubs. None of us had a driver's license, so we couldn't play out of town and I think for the next 20 years, I was the only one with a drivers license. Don't tell any cops, but we actually drove across Canada twice in the van without a driver's license. Recording studios were not easy to find, especially with an engineer who knew punk rock back then.

AU: What was the scene like in Montreal back in the early 80s?

PG: I mean it was good, there were a few bands. They came and went. There was the first wave of hardcore punk which really came out around '81, bands like The Chromosomes, American Devices, Genetic Control came out around then, and Scum. There were some bands, but it wasn't a huge scene.

AU: Victoria is the same, too.

PG: Everybody keeps talking to me like, "Yeah, I wish I was around for the golden years of punk," and I'm like, "You mean the golden years of punk where you'd maybe get a touring band once every three months? All the clubs were closed down, and no one could get in. You mean those golden years?" No, you're living in the golden years. This is the golden years of punk.

AU: People are far too wrapped up in reminiscing about the old days.

PG: I'm not saying that to diss the old bands. We love the old bands, we sound like most of them. It's just, look around there are so many great bands, so many places to play that never existed before. Just go out and enjoy it. When we used to tour, by the time we hit Victoria and Vancouver it turned into a punk cavalcade. You know we'd usually have AWT, Lesbian Fist Magnet, The Hoosegow, and they'd all join on the tour mid-BC and we'd just be this huge group of punk rockers battling across, scaring the locals. Fly fishing in Chilliwack, and doing BBQs on the side of the highway. It was just great times.

AU: Your discography is very impressive. It's 16-17 full length albums.

PG: That sounds about right. I never know. We're around 16, 17, or 18. .

AU: That's something to be proud of. You guys are always putting out new stuff.

PG: It's one of those things that I say, we don't want to turn into our own cover band. We don't want to just play old songs. And one of the reasons we loved touring in the 90s, and the 2000s, is we didn't have a lot of big push or big labels behind us and we just release our own albums and had our own label. We keep on recording new albums, we're recording one in the next couple of months. The title of it, tentatively, is *Don't Buy The First One Jerkwad, Buy This One* because usually the new one is the best one. *Made In Montreal* is our newest full album, and certainly it's in our top three.

AU: You've had some amazing album titles over the years. My favourite was *I Went To The Summit of America and All I Got Was This Lousy Tear Gas Canister To The Back Of My Head*.

PG: And I've got the scar to prove it too!

AU: I'm a vinyl collector, and I have a copy of the *Vinyl Countdown*, which is essentially a greatest hits album right?

PG: Yeah, we decided it had been a long time since we put one out, so we said, let's get back into vinyl in a big way. So we did the double album, we did the bonus CD, and 24 page booklet. We also recorded new songs, then we sell it all for less than it costs for us to actually make it.

AU: Why did you do that?

PG: It's the punk rock thing to do. We call it punkonomics, every time we go play a bunch of shows and then we have enough to record the new songs. Another bunch of shows we have enough to do the mastering, another bunch of shows we have enough to make the booklet. So by the time you're done playing all the shows, it's like three years in the making and we basically paid for the album before it came out. So, we're selling it for less than cost, but whatever we get from the album is financing our next album. Punkonomics!

AU: You've got a really great attitude and it's refreshing. You've got your regular job, you get to go on the road when you've got a chance, you're a family man and you're balancing all of that stuff.

PG: There is nothing better than being in a band. It's like going to a party in your honour every night. I never would have seen Canada the way I've seen Canada if I wasn't in a band. I have met so many people and had so much fun. I get to play with all these great bands and get free beer. It's the best life!

ripcordz.bandcamp.com

facebook.com/ripcordzpunk/

The Resignators / GWAR

Interview with guitarist Steve Douglas

By Ira Hunter

Steve Douglas was also in Death Piggy with Dave Brockie, and a founding member of GWAR, as Balsac, The Jaws of Death.

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what's going on?

Steve: Hi I'm Steve Douglas, and we're here at Victoria Ska and Reggae festival in lovely downtown harbour at Ships Point. We came across with The Resignators all the way from Melbourne, Australia. It was a long, long flight especially for our trumpet player, because Air Canada lost their GPS cable and didn't know which direction to go. We just finished our set and it's an amazing crowd here. It's our fourth time playing Vic Ska Fest, and we just love everyone here. The organizers - it's not a festival for money, it's a festival for love. That's why we love it.

AU: What are your musical roots? Where did you start, and how did you end up here?

Steve: I ended up in Australia after playing in a lot of American punk bands in the Richmond, Virginia State. One was a little one that I started with my friend Dave Brockie called Death Piggy. We had a 7" out on Dischord Records with Minor Threat, Ian MacKaye's label. So one day we put on some costumes and became this fictional interplanetary band that crash landed in Antarctica that was called, GWAR. He and I, we cranked up the GWAR stuff along with some great costume makers and artists from the Virginia Commons, Commonwealth University there, and it became larger than life. I was only on the first album and there was a couple songs on the second album, but still something that holds me to this day. I miss Dave, I saw the picture you have on your album, almost made me cry. I miss my brother there.

AU: How did you end up in Australia?

Steve: About 15 years ago I went down to play a music festival in Australia and I met a bunch of people down there. George Bush was in power and I thought I better get out of the United States. Little did I know what a bullet I dodged, but I'm now a permanent resident of Australia, living in the country down there where there are no guns, there are no mass shootings, people love beer, we have kangaroos, we have koalas, we have all the good stuff.

AU: Those early days of GWAR, it was like an artist collective. What is the difference between the *Hell-O* album and *Scumdogs of the Universe*?

Steve: Well, in my mind - I know everyone has their own opinions of it, the whole band started as a punk band to make fun of metal, and I guess as things do happen, it became what it was parodying. Now they can't play anything but metal shows. We used to play hardcore shows with Corrosion of Conformity, all those good old school punk bands, Butthole Surfers, things like that. So it evolved into what it evolved into. The costumes got a lot more fancy, I loved it when it was a bunch of duct tape and paper mache. Our first blood was actually real blood, we found out that didn't work quickly.

AU: You used real blood in the first GWAR shows?

Steve: Yeah we went down and got real butchers blood and used it. Our hands stank forever. Sleazy P. Martini, his parents had an ice-cream company and we learned we could use carageen, which is a binder in food, and it had that viscous blood kind of texture with red food colouring or you could make it green for gore. We used to have it in the gallons. Tonight is going to be 50 gallons, I think now they use like, thousands of gallons. It was always a mess. The first time we played the 930 Club in DC they said, You'll never play in DC again, because we trashed the place, and then like five years later they were begging us to come back.

AU: Did GWAR have an enemy back then?

Steve: We always had an enemy. Whoever the asshole was of the day, like of course they would have a real good time with Trump now of course. Or like when they came down to Australia, Dave asked what they should do, and I said we have this asshole named Tony Abbott here motherfucker, lob his head off, and they did, and it was the precedent of the century. It was national news.

AU: It was the leader of Australia?

Steve: Yeah, he was a conservative from the Liberal party, figure that one out. They cut his head off and people just loved it. We always had enemies, they could be from within the band, you know, Techno Destructo, Cardinal Syn.

AU: And you were Balsac?

Steve: Yes. I was the original Balsac, Jaws of Death on guitar.

AU: What were the songs you wrote on the album *Scumdogs of the Universe*?

Steve: On *Scumdogs* I wrote "Black and Huge," and "Vlad the Impaler." And on *Hell-O*: "Americanized," "Je M'Appelle J. Cousteau," there are a bunch of them on *Hell-O*. We wrote most of those songs on *Hell-O* in a day, and then a couple others after. "Pure As The Arctic Snow," that was a good one.

AU: And for The Resignators, what's your latest album and what should we be on the lookout for from you guys?

Steve: The new album is called *Party Day*, the title track I wrote about our trumpet player and his life and him getting married and having kids, partying in Melbourne growing up, moving away, coming back just life changes. We recorded it in a really nice studio call Sing Sing in Melbourne with a Venezuelan producer, who is a real asshole, but has really great sounds. He was almost worth it.

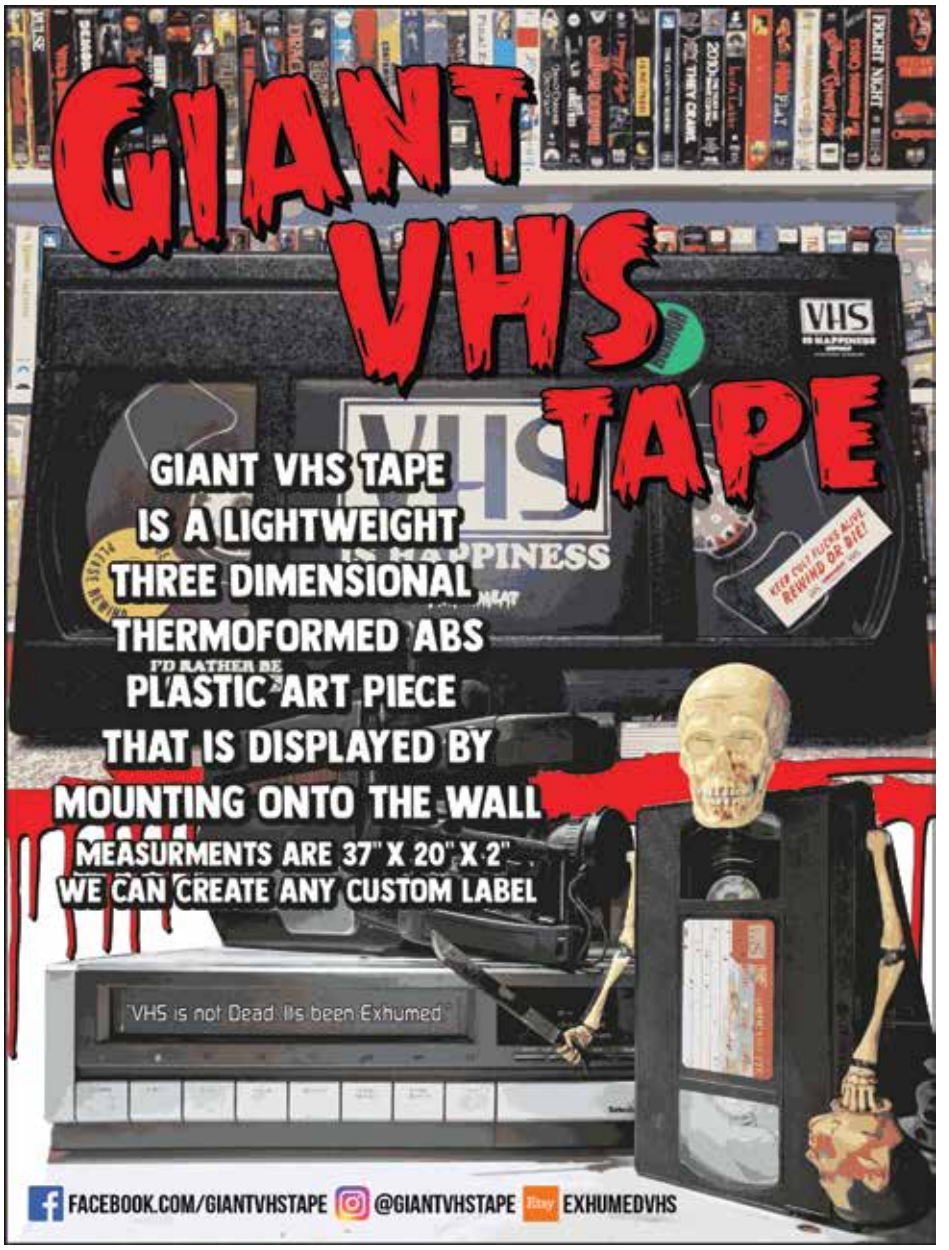
AU: Any Dave Brockie stories? I know it's a touchy subject.

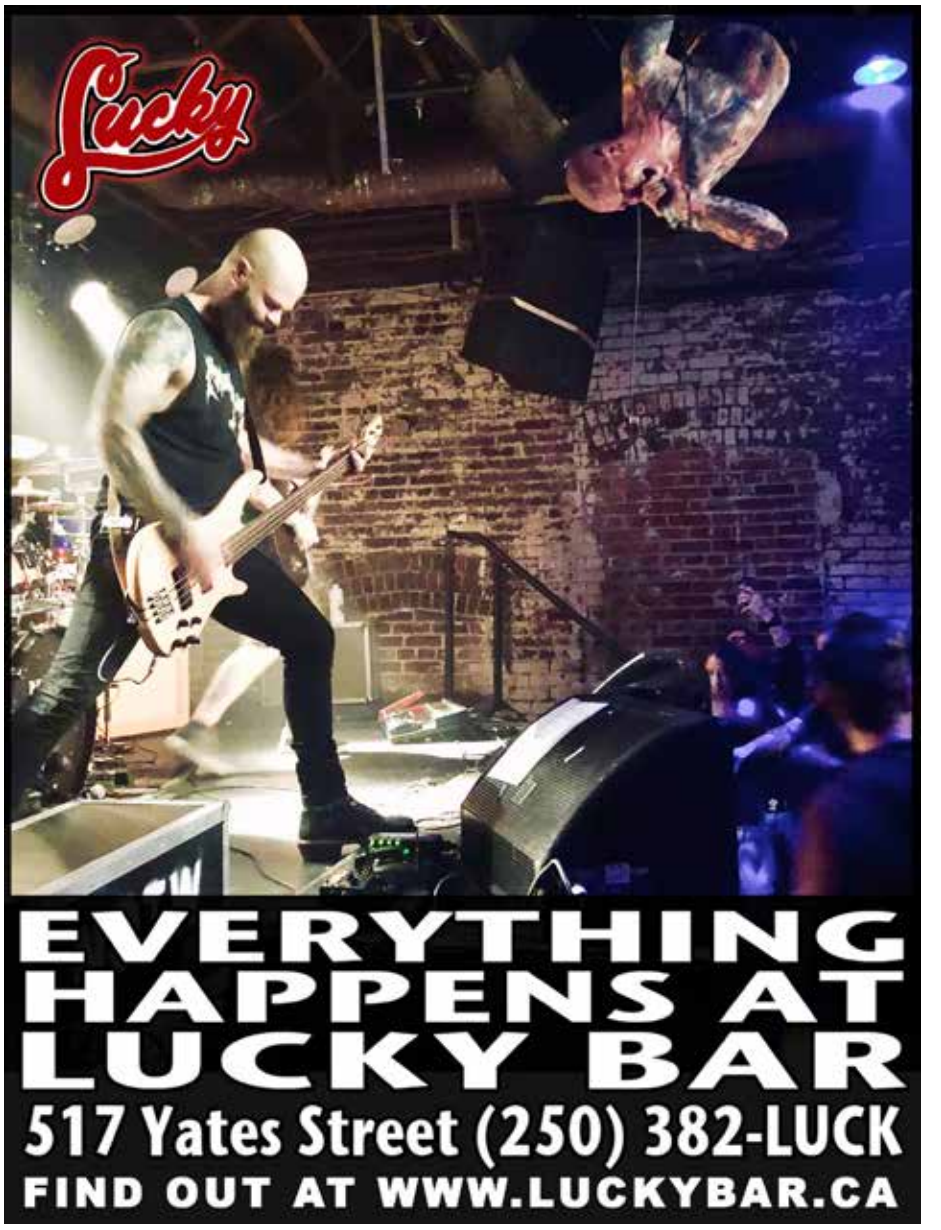
Steve: No, it's not a touchy subject, it's just warm and fuzzy thinking about him. We just loved each other, and grew up together. I admired him, and I'm really sad that he's gone, and fuck heroin as far as I'm concerned. He'd gotten off heroin, and then he came back from tour and didn't know how strong it was or something, but I miss him all the time, and I wish he was still here doing what he does because he was a master of disaster. I mean, just a master. I remember, I lived in this neighbourhood called Oregon Hills, it was right next to one of the oldest cemeteries in the world, there was a reputed warlock buried there along with thousands of confederate soldiers. So what did Dave do? Break into the tomb to take a warlock's bone to brandish on stage, and I thought, I don't know if I'd do that, but he had some balls. One time when we had Death Piggy we thought, "What can we do? What can we do?" And he said, "Well I haven't cleaned the trash out of my house for like a month," so we took all the trash from his house, took it to the club and dumped it all out onto the dance floor. That was good. Even better than that, one time we took a pinata, filled it with cat shit and money and everybody broke it and the money came out. Everybody came scrambling for the money and got covered in cat shit. That's a Dave Brockie thing right there. Luckily he came to Australia before he died, so we got to hang out and catch up.

AU: Final words for Canadian fans of GWAR and Ska?

Steve: Just that music is music. Genres to me... one of these bands tonight was talking about how all the segregation of genres is bullshit. I listen to everything. I learned to play ska when I was 12. I took lessons from these voodoo priestesses and they taught me how to go "nnn-ka, nnn-ka" so that's always been in my blood, but I had fun playing punk rock. Anything that has meaning. As long as it has substance and meaning, it's good music. It could be fuckin' metal, it could be jazz, it could be anything. Too much of it is segmented. This festival has so many bands, it's a Ska and Reggae festival, but it's far-reaching as you can in every direction.

www.theresignators.com





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3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
1 tablespoon honey
1 teaspoon vanillablossom™ vanilla extract
1 cup confectioners' sugar

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease and flour an 8-inch square pan.
2. In a large saucepan, melt 1/2 cup butter. Remove from heat, and stir in sugar, eggs, and 1 teaspoon vanillablossom™ vanilla extract. Beat in 1/3 cup cocoa, 1/2 cup flour, salt, and baking powder. Spread batter into prepared pan.
3. Bake in preheated oven for 25 to 30 minutes. Do not overcook.
4. Frosting: Combine 3 tablespoons softened butter, 3 tablespoons cocoa, honey, 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, and 1 cup confectioners' sugar. Stir until smooth. Frost brownies while they are still warm.

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Add Marilyn Manson and Rob Zombie to the list of tours hitting the circuit this summer. The pair have dates for a six-week co-headlining tour across North America called "The Twins of Evil: The Second Coming Tour 2018." The shows began on July 11 at the DTE Energy Music Center in Detroit and will conclude on Aug. 29 at the Fivepoint Amphitheatre in Irvine, California. Absolute Underground will be in attendance in Phoenix, Arizona August 26th. Find tickets at Ticketmaster.com

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The Damned

Evil Spirits

Interview with guitarist Captain Sensible
By Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Captain Sensible: My name is Captain Sensible. I've just been told I've been playing in The Damned for 42 years, which is a life sentence, isn't it? Longer than a life sentence, because you only get 30 years in Britain, and you usually get a third of that off for good behaviour.

AU: Maybe that's why you always wear the striped shirt?

CS: Oh no, I've never really grown up. Somebody told me that you stay the same age as when you first join a band, so I haven't really grown up. I wear this striped shirt as a tribute to Dennis The Menace. I actually have a catapult, so if the seagulls wake me up at 5:30 in the morning, they get it.

AU: Take me back 42 years to the early days of The Damned?

CS: To be quite honest I was a toilet cleaner and wanted desperately to find some way out of the life of drudgery that seemed to be laid before me. I didn't have any particular talents in any other area at all. I wasn't very good at school, I could play the guitar but of course everyone wants to be a bloody pop star, so my chances seemed slim until punk rock came along and saved me. I was in the right place at the right time. I was very good at causing havoc and chaos and that's exactly what The Damned wanted. I was very lucky.

AU: What was the spark that happened in the UK?

CS: You have to understand that a music fan in 1976, there were slim pickings if you liked raunchy music. There was a lot of really tedious prog rock. Yes and Genesis were boring everyone with their songs about pixies and wizards and 15 minute drum solos. They weren't talking to me or a lot of other people. We had to make the music we wanted to hear, and we had to do it ourselves so punk was very much a DIY movement. We were making the music we wanted to hear but never really thinking it would become successful. There were enough bands doing a similar kind of thing but we all had our own take on it really, but we were lumped together by the music journalists into this thing called punk.

AU: You guys were first out of the gate with the first UK punk release?

CS: Well we were the first mainly because we signed to the DIY label called Stiff Records who were making it up as they were going along. Malcolm McLaren and Bernie Rhodes, The Clash manager, Siouxsie Sioux, they wanted big money deals so they had to wait. Siouxsie had to wait a year and a half before she got her record recording contract which we'd made a couple albums already by then. The Sex Pistols, we were miles ahead of them because they were waiting for the big cash. You know, cash for chaos - I can see that, it's a nice philosophy, but they weren't first. We were, because we signed with a punk label. So there you go.

AU: Tell us about your latest album, *Evil Spirits*.

CS: I think it's about number nine now, it's not a vast amount of records for 42 years - each album has always sounded different from the preceding ones because we just don't want repeat ourselves. It's been a musical adventure in this band, and I think we've really pushed the boundaries. There is still punk in there, but there is also a bit of krautrock, and some psychedelia, and obviously the goth thing. Evil Spirits, Dave and myself wanted to go back to the music we buying when we were kids, stuff like The Kinks, The Who, Small Faces, The Electric Prunes, The Troggs, and Donovan. We were trying to get a lot of influence from the late 60s, early 70s glam rock, T. Rex, Bowie. Which is why we asked Tony Visconti to produce the album. We were very pleased when he said yes, because we wanted that sound.

AU: How did you come up with your persona, and the name Captain Sensible?

CS: Oh crickey, well the true story is I was astonished when not only do they pay you for playing but they give you loads of free beer. I've never left a dressing room without drinking every last drop of beer, it just seemed wrong to me, so I polished off every last crate of beer and I'd turn into an absolute pillock. I was often seen vomiting outside of the show in the gutter. Nobody wanted to look after me because I was obviously going to make a terrible mess of their car. So somebody said, "You've got a right bloody Captain Sensible right there," and I never got rid of the name.

AU: Your appearance on *The Young Ones* TV show, what do you remember?

CS: They were obviously pretty eccentric, good luck to the BBC for letting them get away with it. They would just ask for their favourite bands. Motörhead did it, and we did it, and some other out there bands. It was just fantastic to do because a lot of what went on on the show was actually really live.

AU: How would you describe the singer Dave Vanian if you were setting him up on a blind date?

CS: I've been working with him for 40 odd years and I still have no idea what he's all about. He's a very enigmatic chap. I'm very interested in sound and audio and production, and Dave's totally into style, image, video, and movies.

AU: What would you write on your Tinder profile?

CS: Well, a bit pervy, likes to drink, and play extremely loud guitar.

AU: What was your take on the recent Damned documentary?

CS: I thought it was absolutely abysmal. There is a great movie in this band, but that wasn't it. It didn't really go anywhere, it just name checked everyone and kind of honed in on the row between myself and my ex-colleague Mr. Scabies.

AU: Do you remember the time that you almost set Chris Brief, the drummer from The Briefs on fire with lighter fluid?

CS: Ah, lighter fluid! The thing about lighter fluid is, we used to have the party trick, if you pour lighter fluid on your penis and light it, you can walk in and say "I'm on fire for you, baby!" It doesn't actually burn unless it catches fire to the hair.

AU: What was your inspiration for the giant doobie costume you wore tonight?

CS: I think everyone knows how great the hemp plant is. You can do so much with it, not just the obvious. It fights cancer, you can make clothes out of it, paper - it's just fantastic. Hemp has always been brilliant and J Randolph Hearst, or whoever the loonies are that banned it because the jazz guys were smoking it. Let's just put that behind us and embrace that incredible plant.

AU: Would you like to smoke some now?

CS: I thought you'd never ask.

AU: How was the Burger Boogaloo festival you just played?

CS: It was really good. I thought it was a meat eaters kind of thing, so I turned it down when they first suggested it because I'm a fucking vegetarian!

AU: Punk Rock Bowling, any interesting stories?

CS: We are playing it next year. There is pool parties and all sorts of garbage. I got to jam with James Williamson of The Stooges, you know Raw Power and all that. It was incredible. I'm just a music fan.

AU: Final words to Canadian fans?

CS: It's just really nice to get through a gig in Canada without falling off on stage and breaking a rib, as I did in Toronto about a year ago. The problem is some bastard threw beer on stage and I slipped on it. That and I was showing off a little bit, doing my Chuck Berry impression, doing the duck walk.

AU: At least your gear worked tonight, not like everybody else's.

CS: Yeah, the guitar was singing tonight. Fuck the keyboardist's laptop cables. There is no room for that sort of thing in punk rock. Bollocks to it! Thank you very much Canada for putting up with me!

www.officialdamned.com

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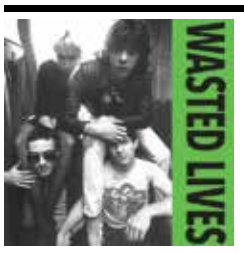

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The Daisy Stranglers

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

Coral Miller: The Daisy Stranglers, outta the city with no pity (Nanaimo, BC). What are we most infamous for? Hmm.... we will respectfully plead the fifth on that, in case our parents or bosses read this!

AU: Give us a brief history of your band, who are you and how did you form?

CM: The band formed in fall 2016 and originally we were an all-girl band... we have had a few great drummers, but now we got us a keeper. Our current line-up is Coral Miller on bass guitar and lead vocals, Diane Slack on guitar and vocals, and Patrick Barrett on the drums. Myself and Diane met at work (both of us are nurses in our paid gigs) and we were both in other bands, I wanted to try something different and always dreamt of being in an all-girl punk band. So one day we were working on the same area, I had just quit my other band, and I remember just staring at Diane. I knew she played bass in another band in town. I said to her, "Damn, I wish you could play guitar." And she said, "Well I can play acoustic." Then I said, "Rad! You wanna be in an all-girl punk band?" It obviously worked out for us... and Pat got delivered to us by a magical unicorn.

AU: Can you describe your music for those of us who've never heard it?

CM: We like to call our sound GRUNK! A new age Riot Grrl-inspired energetic sound that combines high powered angst with a fusion of grunge, garage rock and punk all rolled into one, with a side of attitude.

AU: At the time of this interview, you're about to head out on a three-day jaunt to Victoria and Vancouver... and you mentioned a cross-Canada tour as well? Tell us about them!

CM: Yes we are doing a little three-day mini tour. East Van's Stylus Records, Nanaimo, and finishing in Victoria with some awesome bands we love, it's kind of a reunion. We are playing the Alive #2 festival in Coombs Friday Aug 10 at 8pm. Then we must rest up, 'cause we are going across Canada with our sisters from The Shit Talkers. On Aug 23rd we start in Golden, all the spots in between, and the tour wraps up early September.

AU: Are you all seasoned tour veterans? What does life on the road look like with The Daisy Stranglers?

CM: Diane and myself have never been on a big tour, aside from a few little mini tours. Pat has been around this biz for a long time, in fact he may have even worn spandex when he toured back in the day, but he is definitely seasoned. Life on the road is about playing awesome shows and neat places and venues, meeting people and having fun, all while not taking ourselves too seriously!

AU: You spent June recording some tracks, is that right? When and where can we hear the finished product? What was your experience in the studio like?

CM: We have started to record some tracks but they are not quite finished. We really wanted to be gelling as a band when Pat came on board before we record. Pat is a great fit for us and in the short time he has been a Strangler, it's picked our game up. When it's ready, we will be blasting it hard on the usual places, Bandcamp, Spotify, etc!

AU: What does the rest of the year have in store for you as a band? Will you be doing any more recording? Any dream lineups?

CM: Our hopes for this band is to stay united, true to our sound, keep playing shows, build up to opening for bigger bands, and definitely an album is in the future. We would love to focus on festivals next summer. Dream tours and lineups? There is so many deadly underrated bands that have woman who front them, or all-girl bands but those would be dream tours/shows.

AU: What can we expect to see at your live show?

CM: You can expect to see mayhem when you come to our shows! A lot of stupid jokes, yelling, hopefully drunk people who like us.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already?

CM: What you should know about us that you don't already know... we are secret service agents and being in this band is just a cover for our top secret missions of world domination.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

CM: Final words... don't play music for what you think people want to hear, play it for yourself. Be humble and grateful everyday, and it's never to late to do something you have never done. But most of all it's about the experience, the friendship, and the rock 'n roll!

www.facebook.com/Daisystranglers/

PHOTO CREDIT: John Carlow/ Finding Charlotte Photography

Van Isle Tattoo Expo

Interview by Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we speaking with today and what is your involvement in the upcoming Van Isle Tattoo Expo?

Jordan: This is Jordan, I am an organizer of the Van Isle Tattoo Expo along with my partners Ryan Scarpino and Keegan.

AU: What was the genesis of the idea to put on a tattoo convention in Victoria?

J: Well as locals know it had been a few years since a tattoo convention was put on in Victoria and it just seemed crazy that being in such a beautiful world class city with such an amazing talent pool of artists, there wasn't a badass annual tattoo show! My partner Ryan News Scarpino grew up on the island and brought his experience as a world travelling tattoo artist and we just dove right into it. With such a great response off the bat we knew we were fortunate to have been able to jump on the opportunity and give our best shot at putting on a event that does the artists and the city justice!

AU: This is the second annual Van Isle Tattoo Expo, what are the differences between the first show you put on?

J: We have even more high profile featured artists coming along with a lot returning from last year's show as well. It's just going to be bigger and better with everything we learned from the first one and plus more public awareness, now it's on everyone's radar!

AU: When and where will it all be taking place?

J: It all goes down at the Victoria Conference Center again this year, show hours are Friday August 31, 4-11pm, Saturday Sept 1, 11am-11pm and Sunday 11am-6pm. Friday is age 19+ as alcoholic beverages will be permitted throughout the event, Saturday and Sunday are all ages, there will be a bar in a 19+ room off the main reception area.

AU: What will make this event unique?

J: I think the venue of the Victoria Conference Centre is something that really contributes to great feel of the event, rather than the more typical arena or exhibition hall. Also we have some great artists and talent that people don't really have the opportunity to see at other events in the region so we are expecting a high turnout of not only Vancouver Islanders but also attendees from the Vancouver and Seattle areas making the trip over to come to the event.

AU: How many artists will be attending?

J: We will have a total of about 150 working tattoo artists at the show, which is up by about 25 from last year. All the artists were very busy last year, on everything from huge pre booked pieces that took all three days to little jammers, as lots of artists stay open for walk-ups.

AU: For someone who has never attended an tattoo convention, how does it work for getting a tattoo at the convention?

J: All bookings are direct through the artists, we have no involvement in that process. So people can either reach out to the artists to pre-book (which we do recommend if you have a big or very specific piece in mind), or just show up and roll the dice if you just want to get a fun little tattoo from someone you meet at the show! If you're on the fence, we say just come on down and check it, it's a great opportunity to get a look at different artists and designs, and you can see who you get a good vibe with without the commitment of walking into a shop. A tattoo convention is great platform to get big epic tattoo if that's what you have in mind, as many artists are looking to do big cool tattoos that can be entered into our many tattoo contests through the weekend, including the biggies, Best of Day(s), Best Collaboration and Best of Show.

AU: Any extra special guests appearing this year?

This year we have reached out to some celebrity guests that have some broader appeal both within and outside the tattoo industry, with Jason Ellis and Megan Massacre. Between Jason's hit SIRIUS XM radio show and Megan's exposure from TV's *NY Ink* we are connecting with a huge fan base as Jason is just a generally balls out and hilarious (and heavily tattooed!) dude who makes a meaningful connection with his listeners/fans and Megan is an incredibly talented tattoo artist to go along with her super sweet personality and charm that made her a star! We also have so many world renowned artists such as Steve Butcher, Joseph Haefs, Norm Love Letters, Luka Lajoie, Saga Anderson, Jhon Campuzano, Babiery Hernandez, plus many more. Too many to list!

AU: What is your grand vision for the future of the Van Isle Tattoo Expo?

J: Well we want to hold on to the things that made the first show such a positive experience for everyone and grow at a sustainable rate for the market. We would like for our show to be a bit of a destination event, where artists and attendees come and make a bit of a trip out of it and check out the island for a few days. It's also really cool for us to be able to help get our island artists connected with some of the featured high profile artists coming in, to share knowledge and showcase their skills.

AU: What else do you want people to know about the Van Isle Tattoo Expo?

J: We're having a blast doing what we're doing and want people to know that we're committed to working hard on continuing to make this an awesome event.

AU: Where can one find more info about event? Website?

J: We post a lot of info and communicate through our Facebook and Instagram accounts, and the website www.vanislettattooexpo.ca is a great info source as well, it will have extensive show info added to it shortly, stay tuned! You can also purchase tickets through the website, all pre event buyers will be entered into some cool contests, including a week's stay at Show Pony Resorts in Panama, one of our awesome sponsors! Big thanks to Miss Envy Botanicals, Source Tattoo Supply, Fuel Supplements, Sullen Clothing, Royal Empire Jewelry, West Coast Ink, Dynamic Studios, Buds & Leaves, Gold Teeth Canada and everyone who has believed, supported and helped in what we're doing, we love all you guys! See everybody at the Expo

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Absolute Live Reviews

Social Distortion
June 09, 2018
The Commodore Ballroom, Vancouver, BC

"When I was young I was
invincible,
I find myself now thinking twice,
I never thought about no future,
it's just the roll of the dice."

That's how Mike Ness and Social Distortion opened the show at the legendary Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver, BC on June 9th, 2018. The first show sold out fast, so a second was added for June 10. That show proceeded to sell out quickly as well. The crowd outside the venue was what you would expect for a Social Distortion show. Punks aged twenty to sixty with a bunch of Generation X-aged fans making up the main body of the crowd. Leather studded jackets to gangster inspired suits and hats, the crowd was excited for this show and people had dressed up for this night of music.

"Reach For the Sky" was the opening song the band started with. For myself, this was a life long dream come true. I've been listening to and covering (singing) Social Distortion since 1984. I have Skellie tattooed on the inside for my right forearm. But until June 9, 2018 I had never seen My Band play live. The smile on my face as myself and the other photographers waited in the pit for the band to take the stage was priceless. I had made a trip in the style of Hunter S. Thompson to be there, and on top of seeing My Band I would also have the opportunity to photograph them. The stage was decorated with various Social D signs, street signs and old school lights. The stage lights were perfect, a tip of the hat to the lighting and stage crew. The crowd had waited all night for this, and when Mike and the band took the stage, the crowd responded.

From the very start the band delivered. They were tight, fast and loud. If anyone dropped a note, I don't catch it. If you weren't a Social Distortion fan at the start of the night, you were by the end of it, as one woman commented outside to me after the show (she was attending with her boyfriend). During the first song Mike stopped mid song to address the crowd and an incident of someone throwing a full cup of beer at the stage and in the process taking out a photographer or two. I got lucky, and wore what hit me on my right arm and the camera stayed dry. It's a punk show, I expect to get covered in something, and beer is better than spit. The set was mostly classics by the band, and as any fan will tell you, that collection is extensive. From their brilliant cover of Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire," which ended their set, to the hammering guitars of "Machine Gun Blues," the band was brilliant. "Prison Bound" and "Don't Drag Me Down" brought the crowd to attention, and you could catch the fans singing along, which put a smile on my face.

The band is playing a tour across North America and if they are headed to your town, get your tickets, get them fast and plan for a night that won't disappoint.

-Scott Fraser

Suicidal Tendencies
Havok
Extinction A.D.
The Vogue Theatre
July 17, 2018

Existing in many previous incarnations, this legendary punk-meets-metal group arrived in Vancouver with yet another version of itself. For over thirty years founding member and vocalist Mike Muir has been getting "Cyco" fronting Suicidal Tendencies. This band's stellar catalogue of mosh pit-igniting punk anthems have featured some amazing musicians over that time, and this night was no exception, as former Slayer drummer Dave Lombardo as well as guitarist Ben Weinman formerly of The Dillinger Escape Plan, were on stage to crank out the hits.

To start things off was groove metal band Extinction A.D. who brought the rage right out of the gate and got that circle pit spinning to the heavy palm muted death metal riffs being cranked out. They kept it simple and to the point, aiming to unite the hordes of rebellious people in the crowd through sonic brutality and relatable song themes. By the time Havok took the stage, the Vogue was super rowdy and hungry for some screeching mayhem. That's just what they got in Havok's blackened thrash meets stoner grooves approach as some crazed members of the audience lost control of themselves which kept the security really busy throughout.

On the brink of multiple fights breaking out in the crowd, ST stormed the stage. Starting off with a ten-minute version of "You Can't Bring Me Down" turned the packed Vogue into a thronging spectacle of unified mayhem. Muir stalked the stage like a cellmate on the warpath armed with a menacingly precise message of a hardened criminal on the comeback. Equal parts crazy punk and expletive-laden motivational speaker, the energetic lead singer spoke and sang of overcoming the odds in the face of adversity all night long.

Also the family man, Muir told the assembled that he brought his fourteen-year-old son out on the road with him as a roadie, and that the crowd "better be nice to him." The bandana man turned the testosterone level down again for an endearing moment by inviting a young drummer fan on stage to sit behind Lombardo's massive kit so she could watch him hammer out "Trip To Your Brain" with stunning malice.

Shouting out the refrain, "I Shot Reagan," had Muir grasping an imaginary machine gun as Weinman ejected some signature noise from his axe, adding surprise to a well-known classic. The madness of the dance floor spilled onto the stage as Muir constantly invited "Suicidal Mutherfuckers" up to mosh with the musicians. The horror-themed, "I Saw Your Mommy" further turned the rebellious crowd into a tidal wave of moshing as the sweat-drenched punks came totally unhinged.

Later, Weinman returned the favor by throwing himself into the swirling pit below and the audience held him standing upright for a memorable solo. After a thunderous chant of "Sucidal Tendencies!" from the sweaty crowd, the fired-up band raged through an encore with the classic "Institutionalized" and ended one of their most unforgettable performances in this city with a roar.

-Dan Potter

The Psychedelic Furs
Commodore Ballroom
Vancouver, BC
July 28, 2018

When it comes to the year 1986, certain things may come to mind. The nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, *Crocodile Dundee*, and John Hughes' seminal teen angst movie *Pretty in Pink*. The film was named after the song of the same title by new wave sensation The Psychedelic Furs. It ranks as one of the 25 greatest movie soundtracks of all time by *Rolling Stone Magazine*.

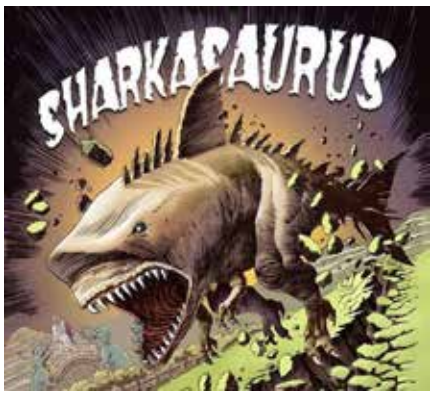
Any live show from a band that hit their peak 32 years ago is worrisome. There's a very good chance that time has not been kind to radio chart toppers since Ronald Reagan was President. The Furs, however, did not disappoint! Richard Butler's raspy vocals sound exactly the same, immediately transporting nostalgic fans back to era of shoulder pads and black nail polish. Keeping the 80s alive, the band wore black and donned shades (guitarist Rich Good didn't have shades, but used a pretty pound of hair gel). Saxophonist Mars Williams provided the backbone of the group's exclusive sound, juggling between the sax and clarinet with reckless abandon.

Although "Pretty in Pink" is the hit song everyone knows, the Furs performed an impressive playlist of other great hits. "Heartbreak Beat" and "Heaven" are both rousing crowd pleasers. "President Gas" is lesser known but eerily relevant, reflecting on early fears of a U.S. President using their wealth to wreak doom upon the planet (sound familiar?!) "Pretty in Pink" is performed as a predictable encore, leaving the melodic song "India" as a bold but satisfying closer. The entire show is an energetic set with enough throwback hits to please both Gen X-ers and Millennials alike.

Sentimental, melodic rock is something that has been shelved with our leg warmers, but when dusted off with the Psychedelic Furs, everyone becomes a romantic and complicated teenager all over again.

-Robin Thompson

Absolute Book Reviews



Sharkasaurus
Spencer Estabrooks

Based on the 2014 short film of the same name, *Sharkasaurus* is also a graphic novel. This fun thrilled romp has all the hallmarks of an enjoyable B-film of the 50s. Those monsters back then (in the cinema front) did not have the help of today's CGI technology to realize them in glorious 3D or realistic proportions. Usually, they were puppets carefully brought to life through stop-motion or marionettes. Flash forward to the print medium, none of that will matter. Those who saw the video will find a huge difference and none of that truly matters when in the desert, nobody can hear your distant scream and mistake that for a screeching hawk.

The book expands on the material from the book and sets Alice Monroe up as the would-be heroine. She and her mate Frankie are in an archaeological excavation to unearth clues to another Proterozoic species said to roam the earth. Along the way, Creationists led by Reverend Peter Matthews and his daughter object to the rewriting of "the scripture." He's your stereotypical evangelist, and quite laughable to say the least. Will he get his just dessert in the desert? The video answers that very easily, and what this dinosaur symbolizes is nothing like *Devil Dinosaur* (Marvel Comics). Godzilla? Maybe.

Had this version been a Hollywood budget film, I'd be on it faster than another SyFy's *Monster Movie of the Week*.

Writer/creator Spencer Estabrooks plays with those ideas quite well. His movies include *Deadwalkers* and *Legend of a Lich Lord*. I find his narrative honours the tropes from all those B-movies quite well and I get the feeling he saw the entire *Tremors* series far too many times. To have a female heroine is nothing new, but to show that she can stand her ground against all the male idiots she has to deal with (and also for the other female characters in this tale) is a nice touch.

The art by Jethro Morales is familiar. He's done work for Dynamite Entertainment and is best known for his work in various *Army of Darkness* titles. The way he emotes the action sequences is nuclear! The gore is tame as I was wanting to see more visceral kills. The colouring job certainly highlight the style for a vintage film, and that alone gives me high hopes for what the next volume can bring. I can only imagine the hunt will get grislier. After reading this work, I'm ready to support crowdfunding part two!

-Ed Sum

Absolute Film Reviews

King Cohen: The Wild World of Filmmaker Larry Cohen

Larry Cohen is the maverick filmmaker, if not a sociologist in disguise. He treats cinema as a reflection on life and he coats it with a ginger touch so that there's perhaps one degree of separation, rather than direct commentary. If moviegoers have not heard of him yet, they will in the documentary, *King Cohen*.

His early life story is quickly told; understanding why he loved the movies meant talking to those close to him, and those who worked hand-in-hand. Filmmakers Martin Scorsese, J.J. Abrams, Joe Dante, John Landis, and Fred Williamson all express their thoughts about this magic man, but for those who were on set, they often mention his clash with the Hollywood system. I can only imagine the arguments should studio executives visit the set. Perhaps, even funnier, is in how he went about "securing permission" when filming at public spaces. The best story has to come with how he went about making *Q: The Winged Serpent* (1982). Today, the production assistants would do a lot of wrangling to insure safety. Cohen did not have that luxury and the chaos is nicely described. As a viewer, it's hard not to laugh.

Richard Lewis, just one of the many collaborators interviewed for this work, said: "He takes pulpy ideas and sets them in the real world and he never loses that sense of reality, no matter how bizarre that happens to be."

Leonard Maltin believes Cohen possesses incredible talent. Some see him as a muse for underground cinema. He's constantly writing, and when he first came into directing, nobody in Hollywood wanted to take a chance on him. Two close friends did, and they talked about the close relationship they had with him. A second watch is needed to fully absorb this biography.

The documentary even compares Larry Cohen to Sam Fuller. It's said both men take on a very do-it-yourself approach to movie-making. When considering Cohen's comprehensive filmography, he's not stuck to a specific genre but rather is glued to knowing what makes life special in the characters he helps bring to life. In the 50s, he contributed to the creation of the Western *Branded,* but not everyone knew him. He came into prominence because of his low-budget horror films. Although his output today is not as prolific as it once was, this feature film suggests he's much more comfortable with a pen and paper by his side, than working with the current studio system.

By this documentary's end, Cohen will be like your grandpa, doting but cynical. After he gets his say, he will then turn to suggest skip summer school and let's spend time at the movie theatre! Because that's where his love for the medium started, I'm sure that's where he will be forever immortalized. Some venue will dedicate a shrine to him.

-By Ed Sum

Absolute Album Reviews

Safe Decisions – Safe Decisions EP
NARC

Safe Decisions' self-titled EP, produced by NARC (Not Another Record Co.) is a super fun blast from the past. They've got an old-school melodic skate punk sound, which works well with their lyrical themes of government corruption, climate change, and sleeping in the drunk tank. Safe Decisions is a relatively new band out of Victoria, BC, and while their EP is obviously short at only five songs, each tune is catchier than the last.

notanotherrecordco.bandcamp.com/album/safe-decisions-2017-ep

- Aeryn Shrapnel

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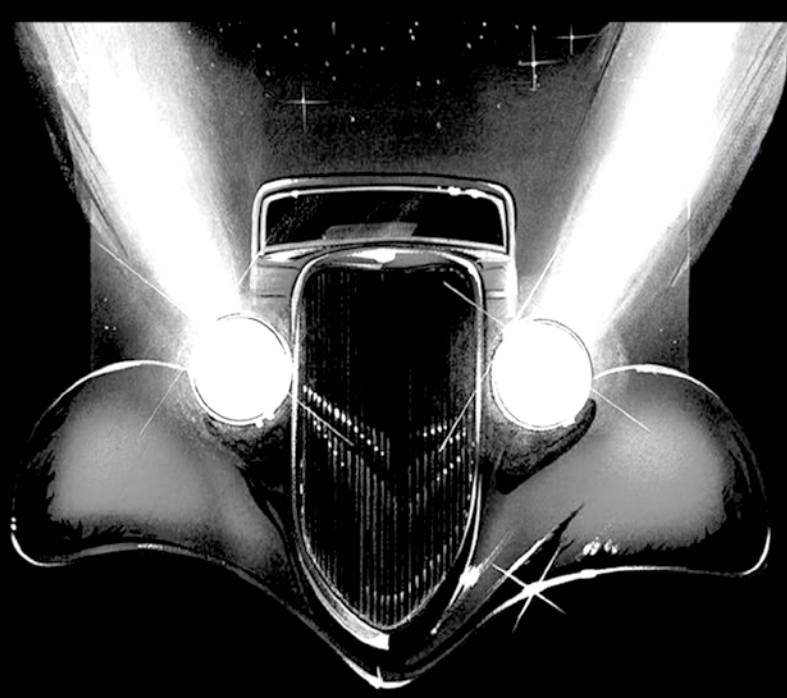

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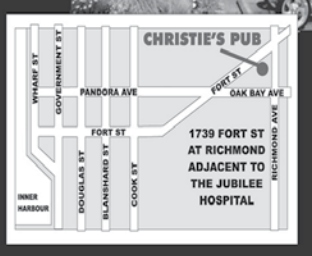

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Wasted Lives

Long Lost Canadian Punk Treasure

Interview with Phil Smith

By Stephen Cribar

Wasted Lives was formed in late 1978 by vocalist Phil Smith, guitarist Colin Griffiths, bassist Mary Armstrong, guitarist Brad Kent and drummer Taylor Little. Just a few months in they quickly lost Kent to San Fran's The Avengers and Little to the Shades. Andy Graffiti came in on drums and they didn't replace Kent. They headed into the studio to record, played some gigs and called it quits in June 1979. However even with the short life span their track "Wirehead" made it on the classic and influential 1979 compilation *Vancouver Complication* and other than that track, Wasted Lives faded from the memories of all but the most fervent punk purists, until now.

Skipping ahead a few decades, Supreme Echo boss Jason Flower has unearthed the recordings and had them remastered by local punk icon Ron Obvious (Pointed Sticks, D.O.A., Spirit of the West, Subhumans) from the original master tape. This is classic sounding late 70s punk rock, albeit very much harder and edgier, but sharing the same song writing prowess and craft as contemporaries The Undertones or The Buzzcocks. Some have called their sound "proto-hardcore" if you're looking for a label.

Another thing that sets Wasted Lives apart from a lot of the punk of the late 70s is that the musicianship is also accomplished. Scalpel-sharp guitar, intricate bass and the unbelievable chops of drummer Graffiti; it sounds like he has eight arms, all brought together by Phil Smith's sardonic delivery.

Absolute Underground: The Vancouver/ Victoria punk scene in 1979 sounds very inclusive, with people playing in multiple bands and, it seems, a lack of competition and rivalry. Tell us about that atmosphere.

Phil: Yes, "inclusive" is a great word to describe both scenes (which in a way were kind of one interconnected scene – hands across the water, literally and figuratively). It was very welcoming – partly an "us against the world" kind of thing and partially a happiness and relief that was a place for freaks like us, no matter what your background, skin colour, sexual orientation etc.

Like any scene, it was not without its rivalries and feuds, but even at the time they seemed remarkably few and minor – perhaps the geographical isolation of these two cities at the time further cemented a "we're all in this together" feeling, one that still seems to have carried on all these years later. Even today, whenever there are events that draw people from the scene back together – the *Vancouver Complication* re-issue party, the Supreme Echo release parties, and yes, as the years go by, some Celebrations of Life also, people seem genuinely happy to see one another again – I think there really was/is a deep affection across the board.

AU: The Toronto/SW Ontario punk scene of the late 70s gets a lot of attention – Teenage Head, the Viletones, Forgotten Rebels…what was the word about the Canadian punk scene back then?

Phil: Hard to say from a West Coast perspective. People knew of these bands a bit – sometimes more through film showings at alternative art spaces like Pumps than records, but very few of these bands seemed to come out all the way out here to play and can't say the Toronto scene was of much influence in Vancouver – I think people here looked further east to England or down the coast, particularly to San Francisco – there's always been a Cascadia vibe throughout the West Coast.

AU: What is the legacy today of BC punk?

Phil: Not sure if ultimately it's different than the legacy of other punk scenes. I think that punk always provided a source of energy and inspiration – whether in the alleys of New York, the council flats of London or the beautiful scenery of B.C. – in its attitude of DIY, of solidarity and loyalty, of supporting one another that transcends a specific locale or culture. But there was I suppose an interesting aspect of incongruity re punk vs. Vancouver's lushness and perhaps because of this also a lot of huge, larger than life personalities that emerged and which maybe owed as much to vaudeville as to punk (although these two may not be so far apart either, e.g. the Sex Pistols).

The other thing I think was fascinating about B.C. punk and which did set it apart somewhat was just how strong the songs were – a lot of great anthems that came out of that time – which no matter how hard-edged and punk on the one hand also had a great pop sensibility on the other – even D.O.A.'s "Kill, Kill, This is Pop," is really a pretty catchy song!

AU: Wasted Lives recorded four songs and broke up in under a year. How do you explain the longevity of the band?

Phil: Really have no idea. The band did seem to have its own sound and way of approaching things which, from what I remember, puzzled us as much as everyone else! I also think, like many Vancouver bands as noted above, the songs were there and from a singer's perspective at least, Colin, Mary and Andy really created a unique sonic landscape that was a singer's dream to try to float some words over.

Photos: John Sherlock

AU: Brad Kent was with the band for just a couple of months and left to join The Avengers, for only a few months as well. Tell us about the relationship with Brad.

Phil: Besides being a great guitarist and amazing songwriter (I mean just listen to "Corpus Christi" by The Avengers), Brad was also an amazingly positive and energetic person who was really the driving force in getting this band going and pushing it to play (both in a space of about four days!) Although Colin and Andy were pretty experienced players already, for me (and perhaps Mary but you'd have to ask her) who'd only done a few one-off guest shots singing in front of people, Brad really gave a push that, "Hey, we're gonna do this thing and it's gonna rock!"

Editor's Note: Brad Kent died from complications of the virus H1N1 on February 3, 2016.

AU: What were you listening to in 1978?

Phil: Pretty much everything, but maybe with a definite edge to the British prog-punk(?) like Magazine, The Stranglers, and the Fall – as my musical background is piano/keyboards was probably drawn to this particular strain of Punk/ New Wave. Definitely remember also being obsessed by the Advert's first album, Blondie's *Plastic Letters* (I think their masterpiece), and Talking Heads' *More Songs about Buildings and Food* (their masterpiece also) and of course the Vancouver singles that had come out to that point – D.O.A. Subhumans, A/V, Pointed Sticks, Dishrags etc. – not because they were from Vancouver but just because they were great singles and always seemed to dominate the turntables at parties back then. I still maintained a sweet, if somewhat downplayed, spot for Led Zeppelin and the Doors and obscure '60s classic pop. I seem to remember Johnny Cash and Coltrane also sounding great back then – maybe both very punk in their own way.

AU: How has it been to have all this attention on Wasted Lives and the old scene as a whole 40 years later?

Phil: It's been great if a little strange at times going back that far in terms of memories and music, but I am just happy that people still seem to enjoy the songs – at the record release party, it was the first time that all four of us had been in the same room together since the last Wasted Lives gig (with the Avengers in May 1979), but it felt as if it could have been yesterday in terms of the collective energy and excitement maybe the songs and record have that same kind of feeling?

https://supremeecho.bandcamp.com/album/wasted-lives

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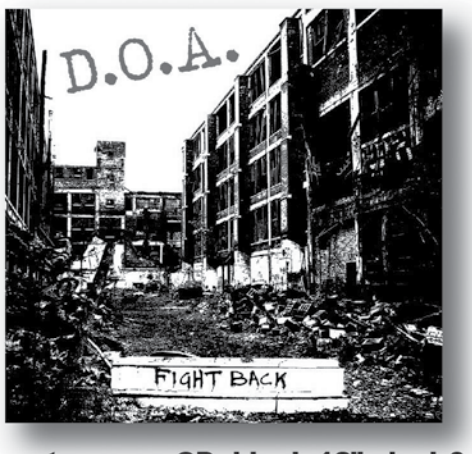

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Culture

Interview by Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with today?

Kenyatta Hill: Well you are speaking with Kenyatta Hill from the group Culture. We're in Victoria, British Columbia and I'm from Jamaica. And I love reggae music!

AU: We are on another island of reggae music cause it's the Ska and Reggae festival. Do you meet a lot of beautiful ladies on the road?

KH: Oh yeah! My wife is also on the road... so I've got to behave myself!

AU: What do you know about the Victoria Ska and Reggae festival? What brought you here?

KH: Basically my agent: Fastlane International, they got me the gig and I absolutely adore it. Beautiful ride over on the ferry, then came to this beautiful island, the best show since the start of the year.

AU: Are you enjoying the herbal delicacies, the weed of BC?

KH: Yes, yes, yes! Exceptionally good. I was high the whole time on stage!

AU: People were throwing big joints up on stage -

KH: Oh yes! And buds!

AU: Could you give the people of Canada a brief history of the band Culture that have missed the last 40 years?

KH: Well, you have missed 40 years of spiritual experience. Not only spiritual but a life experience because what we sing about is every day's experience. And what we sing about, there is somebody that could relate to our words, somewhere, at some point in time, across this world. So for the people here in Canada, go to Spotify, go to Youtube, go to iTunes, wherever! Get tuned in with Culture and Kenyatta Hill and get in tune to the cultural experience and movements.

AU: Now this is the 40th anniversary of the very first Culture record.

KH: Well actually it's 42 years.

AU: What was the title of the first album?

KH: It was called *Two Sevens Clash*.

AU: Is marijuana a religion to you? Is it a ritual to smoke?

KH:Well for me, marijuana is sacramental and you should treat it with respect. There are many other herbs that could get you in a state of meditation where marijuana does but how do you know? You've gotta try it, I'm not willing to try it! Ever since I was a kid, this is what I've seen and I'll stick with my marijuana until I die.

AU: You can trust it.

KH: I can trust it. It was created by the almighty, who am I to question it? It was placed in our possession for us to use it, so we must! Just like you hear me say on my record, "Since the beginning of time, every culture used the ganja, true medicine for the mind, the blessed ganja herb, even the father, they find, and sanctify the ganja herb, what Babylon telling me is a crime, to utilize the ganja herb." Now who are Babylon to tell I, how to set your rules against something that I did not make? It was placed in our possession for us to use it, every plant that bear seed, all of those shall be your food.

AU: What is your newest music? You have a solo album?

KH: It's called *Riddim of Life*. But now we are in the studio with another fresh album, this is going to be a Culture album, not a solo one.

AU: It's a rebirth of Culture. It's a new Culture.

KH: It's a new generation. The next generation! I'm the next generation. I've heard it many times: "Oh, you sound like your dad – your voice!" Then I'm like, ok give thanks, but I'm just trying to keep his music, his legacy, alive!

AU: Did you used to go on tours with him a lot as a kid?

KH: I started touring with the band when I was 14 years old as a technical engineer for many years, until my father died. He died when I was 28 years old so now I'm 40 years old.

AU: Final words for Canadian fans of reggae culture.

KH: Whenever time you hear reggae music or any music - just support! Reggae, ska, blues, jazz, R&B, hip hop, soul, whatever! It's music!

www.kenyattahill.com

www.culturereggaeband.com

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Aug 8 @ Pub 340:
Novareign (California), Railgun (California), Apprentice, Ophelia Falling

Aug 15 @ Pub 340:
Hickoids (Texas), Skeeter & The Deets, Subverter

Aug 17 @ Rickshaw*:
Riffs And Rhymes with Alpha Omega, Assimilation, The Vth Circle, Dead Alive

Aug 19 @ 333:
Nylithia, Augurium (Regina), Detherous (Calgary), Death Preacher

Aug 24 @ Astoria:
The Press Gang (Calgary), Lungflower, Paramnesia, Off By An Inch

Sept 7 @ Astoria*:
Xul (Vernon), Gladius Sky, Arrival Of Autumn (Grande Prairie, Becomes Astral (Ontario), Giants Arise

Sept 15 @ Pub 340*:
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SUNDAY 5 HOOTENANNY 4PM - 8PM / FREE	MONDAY 6 HAPPY BC DAY WE'RE OPEN NOON - 1AM	TUESDAY 7 BLACK SHEEP COMEDY // 8PM GRAYSON WALKER'S KARAOKE FREE // 9PM - 1AM	8 HAPPY HOUR MONDAY TO FRIDAY 3PM - 5PM	9 LINE UP TO BE ANNOUNCED LOGANSPUB.COM	10 HOLY SMOKES & ACTION INDEX PRESENT WOOLWORM (VANCOUVER) WARES (EDMONTON) TEENAGE WEDDING CROWN 9PM / $12	11 INTERZONE PRESENTS EIGHTIES DANCE 1980 - 1989 EVES OF DESTRCUTION ROLLER DERBY AFTER PARTY 9PM - 1AM / $8
12 HOOTENANNY 4PM - 8PM / FREE	13 HAPPY HOUR MONDAY TO FRIDAY 3PM - 5PM	14 BLACK SHEEP COMEDY // 8PM GRAYSON WALKER'S KARAOKE FREE // 9PM - 1AM	15 FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM @LOGANSPUBVICTORIA	VANCOUVER ISLAND METAL FESTIVAL 2018 16 XUL (VERNON) FINITE GRAVEOLENCE SHAMBLING CORPSE 9PM	17 NECK OF THE WOODS BLACKWATER BURIAL AMNESIAN GNOSIS 9PM	18 ALDA HARROW HEIDENLAND MANDRAGORA 9PM
19 VIMF / CFUV DEATH METAL BREAKFAST LIBERATIA / TERMINAL SEQUENCE WIDOW'S PEAK / THIGMA LYME IN THE GRAVE FREE WITH FEST PASS or $10 11AM	20 WATCH FOR OUR ROTATING BEER TAP SPECIALS	21 BLACK SHEEP COMEDY // 8PM GRAYSON WALKER'S KARAOKE FREE // 9PM - 1AM	22 HAPPY HOUR MONDAY TO FRIDAY 3PM - 5PM	23 LINE UP TO BE ANNOUNCED LOGANSPUB.COM	24 FOREVER FROST LIBERATIA 9PM	25 LINE UP TO BE ANNOUNCED LOGANSPUB.COM
26 HOOTENANNY 4PM - 8PM / FREE	27 PATIO NOW OPEN EVERYDAY	28 BLACK SHEEP COMEDY // 8PM GRAYSON WALKER'S KARAOKE FREE // 9PM - 1AM	29 FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK.COM/ LOGANSPUBVICTORIA	30 LINE UP TO BE ANNOUNCED LOGANSPUB.COM	31 BLACK DOG LED ZEPPELIN TRIBUTE TNT + MK5 9PM	MONDAY - THURSDAY : 3PM - 1AM FRIDAY : NOON - 1AM SATURDAY : 11AM - 1AM SUNDAY : 11AM - 12PM 1821 COOK STREET 250-360-2711

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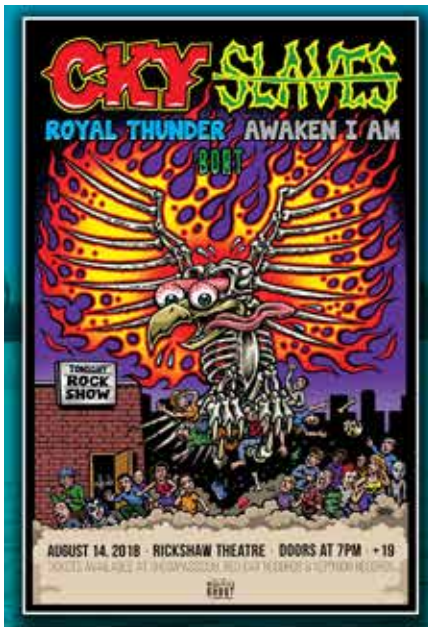


subculture

By wendythirteen

Is social media becoming a sizzling dumpster fire? Facebook is running unvetted, sponsored, scam companies ads for revenue that cause ripoff hassles for their client base. I speak from past experience on this one. There is something about online shopping that creeps me out. May I recommend a quick trip to scam adviser dot com to save yourself the headache. Also, pay with PayPal as they have the ability to fight these glorified telephone solicitors. That's how I got a refund.

Why Facebook isn't protecting the people using their platform boggles my mind. Between the fake 'news' stories shared and now allowing scammers to feature criminally intended phishing content, trust is a serious issue. You would assume that when a shopping site is running an ad featured on Facebook it receives the same scrutiny as being forced to use my legal name on their platform. When I tried to sponsor shows before I was denied because there was too much print on my poster image. But scammers with eight-day old 'shopping' websites are cool?

I now see almost daily viral posts by call out warriors, cyber pitchforks and torches flailing. Usually the culprits deserve it. I guess it keeps the bigots in line, by getting them fired from their jobs and noticed by law enforcement. Public incitement of hatred is now a legal criminal offense in Canada with the public doing the evidence gathering via screenshots and camera phone video. This is also a dangerous situation where vigilante lawlessness akin to the wild west could occur. Good thing the ban on concealed carry for agitated citizens is a thing in this country.

Will cyberbullies settle down? Probably not. They seem to have taken on an evidence based justice warrior tone. Much different then the lashing I received a few years ago by a bunch of childish pukes spouting bullshit. After that fiasco, I remember complaining in a post about the residents of my building and their irresponsible discarding and sorting of their garbage and recycling. That somehow morphed into the insinuation that I was a fascist that hated poor people who eke a living picking garbage and a graffiti scrawled sign appeared down my alley saying the same thing. Like what the fuck? People, man. I kept the tabletop sign. It will make a great fish tank support some day. Look at me picking up garbage from the alley.

I haven't spent as much time online since I lost my daily dose of social media event posting job at the end of April. I've be doing way less live shows in the gig department too. That was my original reason for signing onto most social media platforms. It was useful for spreading the word about the shows I was peddling, and playing Scrabble. wendythirteen is my name. Underemployment is my game these days. Although having a cave full of critters keeps me busy, it doesn't pay the bills.

Which leads me into the Door Gal Diaries. My latest vocation in the music subculture. I have become the on call door person at Pats Pub. I never realized how trying doing that job can be sometimes. Trying to remember faces. I've even asked a new Pats bartender to see his stamp, as he had shed his coat. I guess my Fashion Diploma makes me take more notice of what someone is wearing versus their face. Same goes with hair. I have a weathered, dusty Cosmetology Diploma somewhere. Trying to find a place for the admission stamp to go on the heavily tattooed. Gawd that makes me giggle.

It's the rudeness and entitlement of how people treat the service industry that blows my mind. I haven't experienced that since I quit bartending. When I was just a boozy promoter or venue owner, I had a choice about who I interacted with. Having to deal with every person attending has been quite the wakeup. I've pretty much become a reclusive homebody with sobriety in my personal life, so this new chapter is like the even steven of forced sociability.

The excuses people give you on why they should get in for free create wonderful comedic episodes. The songs, the dances, I feel like compiling a top ten list of cover charge balking excuses. I document a lot of them as Facebook posts called 'Door Gal Diaries'. The latest top tenner was a dude that figured he needs to be allowed in Pats for free for life because he was electrocuted by a mic short there a decade ago. Did that happen? Who knows?

I will never understand why people have no problem paying upwards of a couple hundred bucks to be sardined into an arena with ten buck beers for the big guys or festivals yet become the biggest cheapskates when it's killer unknown local heavy music who need your support the most. 'I know the band' doesn't pay their bills. Especially when a ten dollar cover breaks down to two bucks per band after the standard sound costs are taken out.

I'm pretty stoked that I'll be doing door every Friday in August at Pats as they are Big Band gigs. Swoon. I love that shit.

nobollocks.ca

Cannabis Patient Profile: Meet Margie

By Julia Veintrop

I had never heard of juvenile arthritis until one day when I was working at the VCBC; a very warm and friendly senior couple, Ian and Margie, came through the doors. Right away, I noticed two bright, contagious smiles while I served them, delighted to hear them express how cannabis had saved their lives.

Margie handed me a bill and I saw that each finger was balled into tight, painful looking cramps. I asked her if it hurt and handed over her cannabis cookies.

She looked at me and said, "Ahhh, it's not so bad when I have these. Plus, someone has is worse than me.", as she smiled warmly from her eyes to her heart.

October 17, 2018, the day recreational cannabis becomes legal in Canada, is not a day that Margie is looking forward to; the threat to shut down compassion clubs that do not comply with these regulations will affect medicinal access to thousands… Margie is one of them.

I sat down with Margie and her partner Ian to talk about her health, their life together and how cannabis has made an impact.

Absolute Underground: Can you tell me a bit more about your condition?

Margie: I was diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis when I was in my twenties but I can remember having it since I was five years old. It is severe. I have had surgery on almost all of my joints but especially my knees, shoulders and feet.

AU: How and when did they start to treat you?

Margie: Immediately, I was put on a regular Aspirin regimen. I was given Aspirin at least every four hours to help deal with the severe pain and inflammation. I took about ten per day at minimum from five years old until my early twenties. They also tried giving me all sorts of different types of shots. I had gold shots for a while. Literally injections of liquid gold mixed into a solution and they were supposed to help. Thinking back, I guess they kind of did.

AU: That sounds awful!

Margie: It was really tough and very painful. It did a lot of damage to my stomach and cause me a great deal of nausea. That's actually why they stopped giving me Aspirin; taking it so regularly for so long had really wrecked my stomach. So, they tried all sorts of other treatments, like the gold injections.

Ian: She has really been through so much. She has had every medication given, known by our doctors, specialists, right up to the most expensive which you do not get until everything else has tried and failed.

AU: I have to ask, how expensive were the gold shots?

Margie: Oh they were probably a lot but I don't know for sure, the government paid for them. They were doctor prescribed.

Ian: The most expensive medication she was on was a family of biologics which gratefully has been paid for by Pharmacare. It cost our government $20,000 per year.

AU: What other treatments has your doctor prescribed?

Margie: Over the years, I have tried so many different things and a lot of them have worked for a little while. Having Rheumatoid Arthritis is like have having your body constantly at war with itself, producing too much or too little of the wrong enzyme. The condition is always changing; the problem with my body and pharmaceuticals is that eventually, I would have a reaction to the treatment. I have come quite close to dying.

Ian: Margie has been on three different forms of these biologic drugs and they have all worked amazingly well for a time and then quit. One of them turned on her. Instead of attacking the arthritis, it attacked Margie.

AU: That is terrifying. What happened to you?

Margie: I had a reaction to one of the medications I took. It acted to block the enzyme that created all of my severe inflammation until one day, it just reacted. All of my ribs, shoulders and neck became so inflamed that I could barely use my chest muscles to draw a breath. My heart began to swell from the strain and I couldn't even speak to express what was happening.

I should have called and ambulance but didn't as I had been through this before. Ian gave me cannabis oil and slowly, my body relaxed.

Ian: Her heart swelled up, her lungs were full of a liquid. She had large blisters all over her body, full of a liquid no one knew what it was. When the blisters broke her skin was dry, red, cracked and bleeding. That is when I found where to buy an ounce of phoenix tears, pure marijuana oil. I gave Margie the oil in large increments half hour apart, that's when her swelling went down in her heart. Her lungs cleared up, her pain went away and the blisters healed. It was like a miracle.

I have no doubt that this attack could have killed Margie. I believe the marijuana oil saved her life.

AU: Was that the first time you had used cannabis?

Margie: No, I think it was 1981 and I was in my twenties. I was having another episode where my body was reacting to the treatment and I was lying on the floor, in agony. My boyfriend at the time used pot and I didn't care but I had never ever tried it. I was in such severe discomfort and it gave him the idea. He said something to me like, "You know I think I heard that pot is really good for pain," and I was desperate for relief. One toke and I had instant relief. I slept 12 hours that night for the first time that I could remember.

AU: What was the attitude towards cannabis at the time?

Margie: It certainly wasn't legal and was frowned upon. It was risky to get but it worked so well for me. I was very strict with my use and only smoked medicinally, never for a recreational purpose. I used it only when my condition was really bad.

AU: Can I ask, are you in a lot of constant pain?

Margie: My pain can depend on a lot of factors but at the moment I am doing pretty good. If I don't regularly dose with my THC oil, it can escalate. Plus, it all depends on how much I move. It's like a grinding sensation on my joints, the more I do it continuously, the worse it feels.

Oh well, smile. Life's good. Remember there's someone who's worse off.

AU: Can I ask a bit more about cannabis and how much you use?

Margie: I have used a lot of different types of cannabis medicine in the past but I find that concentrated THC Oil works the best for me. Of all the types I have used, a company called Viridesco makes an oil that work better than anything for me.

Ian: I have bought many brands and even had some made for her but these ones work the best.

Margie: I started always going for Indica but I tried the sativa and the results are beyond what I could have hoped for. It's like my body isn't getting used to the different strains but the company has a high standard for quality so all of it is working.

AU: How much do you take?

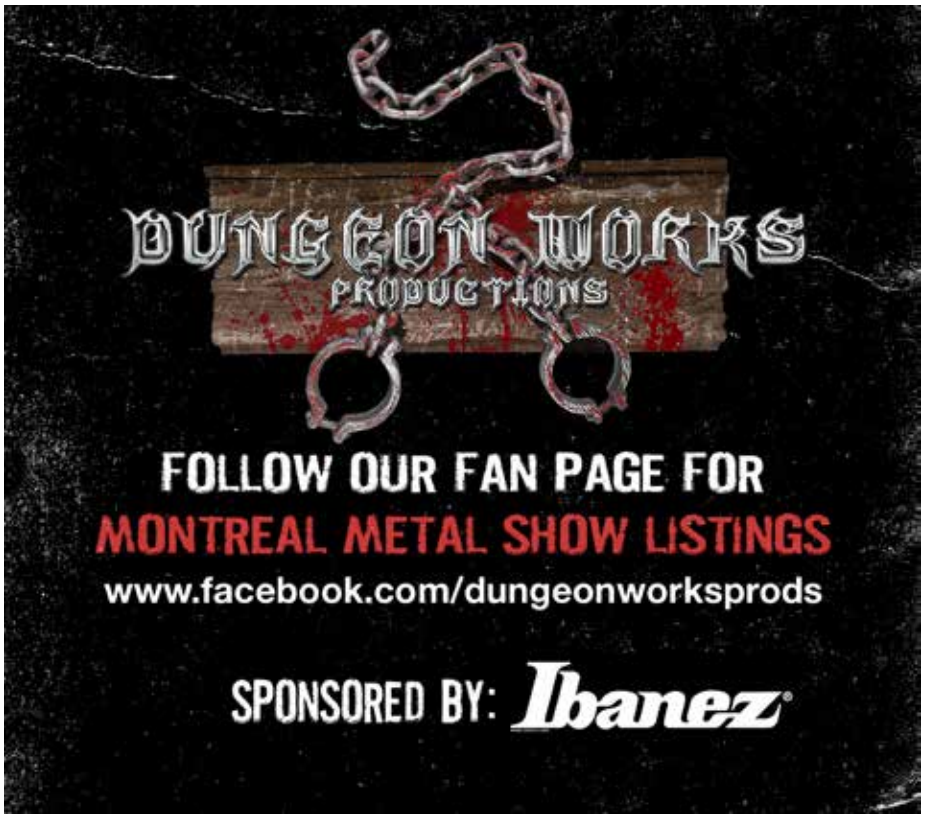
Margie: I take anywhere from a grain of rice to a frozen pea's amount roughly every 4 hours, morning to night. That is all I take. I don't take any pharmaceuticals; this is my only medicine and it works better than anything else I have ever tried. I am getting older and my body can't take another reaction. I wouldn't live through it.

I have no doubt in my mind, cannabis is my medicine and I would die without it.

Ian : Victoria has an attitude that has been excellent for people such as us to get our medicine. Also our club VCBC, which found for us the most excellent oil which Margie uses every day now. With this oil and the drug to help with inflammation we are winning the war against arthritis. Thank God for our our club and for the Viridesco oil we now use... That we are in jeopardy of losing thanks the so many government regulations.

Margie buys her oil at an illegal compassion club, the VCBC. Viridesco produces the life saving medicine Margie depends on. There is no place for either of them under these new, recreational regulations but for people like Margie, if they do not continue to operate regardless of the law, the consequences can be fatal.

https://vcbc.live/



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Victoria Fringe Festival

By Ed Sum

Victoria, BC's annual Fringe Theatre Festival (August 22 to Sept 2, 2018) is not only a terrific way to cap off the summer, it's also a place for performers to simply experiment. Their efforts are to be commended as a lot of what audiences see is very minimalist, if not DIY. Some shows must be seen to be believed, like the sequel to Fake Ghost Tours from last year, and others are simply crazy. It's electrifying to see what they can do, and dizzying should it include demanding physical prowess.

Newcomers will at least find one show to check out. Location details and tickets are available for purchase online via www.intrepidtheatre.com or at the door. Picks of this year include:

A Brief History of Beer

Drink-a-long through time in the quantum pint machine! A sci-fi sketch comedy based on the life and times of the humble beer. Stagebuddy NYC says it's, "the ultimate tribute to Homer Simpson's favorite drink."

Vice City: Underground & After Dark

For more than 150 years the super secret underground society of Victoria has lurked beneath the shadows of Douglas street, manipulating the burgeoning city to their sinister will. Witness as they meet to celebrate their achievements, and through improv, retell the story of Victoria as it's never been told before.

Ernie and Bethy

What happens when puppets grow tired of being controlled and decide to overthrow the human regime? Puppet revolution, a struggle to create 'real art' and a healthy dose of existentialism. Come see down-and-out Ernie and overachieving Bethy try to create a children's show while the foul-mouthed puppets attempt to take over.

Kitt & Jane: An Interactive Survival Guide To The Near-post-apocalyptic Future

Two 14-year-olds hijack their school assembly and train their classmates to survive the coming apocalypse. A poignant exploration of the world today's youth are inheriting, and how they're willing to fight for it. Sequel to *Interstellar Elder*.

Fake Ghost Tours 2: Tour Fast, Tour Furious

Ghost hunting brothers Abdul Aziz and Shawn O'hara return with a walking tour so accurate and frightening that you'll wonder how you'd never heard these unquestionably true stories before. From the history of Victoria's first ghost business owner to the city's most haunted payphone, no rock will be left un-toured.

intrepidtheatre.com/festivals/fringe-festival/

2018 San Diego Comic Convention

By Ed Sum

Many announcements and bombs happened over the July 18th to 22nd weekend at SDCC. From the firing of James Gunn, director of the wildly fun *Guardians of the Galaxy* to the confirmation of the exiting of Andrew Lincoln (Rick) in *Walking Dead*, the news in the comic book cinema/television front is fortunately not all that bad. Instead of focusing on the big name news of what new movies are coming, the following is a greatest hits package of what to look for at comic shops in the coming months.

1. Full Moon Features are launching their own comic book label! First up is *Dollman Kills the Full Moon Universe*! This diminutive cop is on a mission, and the first issue only teases at his agenda. This six-issue series is written by Shawn Gabborin (*Puppet Master: Curtain Call*) and Brockton McKinney (*Gingerdead Man: Baking Bad*). Contributing cover artists include Tony Moore (*The Walking Dead*), Ben Templesmith (*30 Days of Night*), and Robert Hack (*Sabrina*).

2. Set to release this fall is *Apocrypha: The Legend of Babymetal*. This graphic novel will explore the unknown mythology of the group. At SDCC2018, Amuse Group USA revealed the first of four variant covers, created by GMB Chomichuk. This band has a devoted fan base and for those who happen to be in Tokyo October 23, fans can delight in their next show.

3. Due to hit shelves early October is *Yoshitaka Amano: The Illustrated Biography—Beyond the Fantasy*. Nearly 400 Illustrations and photos in the career of this creator/artist can be found in this work which Dark Horse Comics is releasing. He is known for his contributions to the *Final Fantasy* series and he is the creator of *Vampire Hunter D*!

4. Video game fans will get an all new tale set in Blizzard's *Diablo* universe. Titan Comics is publishing this four-part series. Here, scholars and crusaders are wanting answers to the origins of of their species and why was this fate cast upon them. Man and demon might have been one and the same a millennia ago. Those who played the game will know some history. This tale is written by Marv Wolfman (*Blade, Crisis On Infinite Earths*), and illustrations by Piotr Kowalski (*Wolfenstein*) will tie it all altogether.

For an expanded list of picks from this event, please visit otakunoculture.com. You can also follow me on Twitter @Edohotep

Tyjae Armstrong

Interview by Malcolm Hassin

Absolute Underground: What's your name, man?

TA: Tyjae Armstrong

AU: Where do you come from?

TA: Oshawa, Ontario

AU: Did you grow up skating there?

TA: Grew up skating in Oshawa, Donevan Park, every day, all day, since I was 14 years old, that is when I started and got stuck into the scene from there.

AU: Who do you skate for?

TA: Skate for myself, my friends, family... I've done it for the love my entire life.

AU: Where have you been skating lately?

TA: Just went on a trip down the west coast down to California, skated with a bunch of friends out there. Two weeks was the plan, but it turned into four months of living outta my car.

AU: How's the car handling?

TA: She's toast, toast the whip 2017-2018, still goin', won't die. It's been skated, lived in, anything you can imagine, partied on, partied in.

AU: How long have you been in Vancouver?

TA: Going on five years now

AU: What do you think about it here?

TA: West coast, best coast, that's why I've been here the whole time. I visit home for friends and family, other than that, this is my new home.

AU: Where do you skate most in Vancouver?

TA: Right here, Plaza is the go-to. It's where I met everyone when I first moved here. It was all I knew, so it was the ideal spot to come. Stemmed out from here, met all my good friends from Plaza, kept on travelling and skating with those couple homies from thereon out.

AU: What do you think about the viaducts coming down, and a new Plaza being built?

TA: I am not super OG with Plaza so I don't have that many feelings about it. I think it's crazy, just growing up seeing this place, I've known about this place long before I skated, but it makes for a better future, there's something else that's going to come out of it, maybe better park, maybe better atmosphere, who knows? We'll see when it happens, I guess. There is no stopping it, so thankfully we have something that's going to come back it up, and we're not just going to be left in the dust. That's gold, I think that's something else to come out of it, at least.

AU: Any songs been pumping you up to skate to?

TA: I've been on to some wacky music, some good music, I've been backing Shaggy, hooked on skating to Shaggy, Ja Rule, I dunno, just listening to some bullshit. I don't skate seriously, so listening to some dumb music, that's what gets me going nuts.

AU: Skate scene in Vancouver... any thoughts?

TA: It's sorta clique-y, but that's like anywhere I've skated in Canada, everyone has their crews, everyone sticks to what they know. I just try to be a mutual person who knows everyone and skates with everyone. If I see people, say, "What's up." It's just skateboarding, riding wood, it's a fuckin toy. It's fun, keep it that way.

AU: What about skateboarding and the Olympics?

TA: Crazy talk, has nothing to do with me, that's for sure, anyone else who gets sucked into that shit, I mean, opportunity is opportunity if you're living your dream, that's your fucking dream. Live it, have fun, things are progressing, things are changing, it's the future, we're living in it.

AU: Do you consider skateboarding to be a sport?

TA: It's starting to become one. With all the money that's being put into it and all the shit that's happening around it, of course it's going to be a legitimate sport. It is I guess, people are training there are kids training at this point, it's a fuckin' sport.

AU: Skateboarders are becoming jocks!

TA: That's it, just real big dick heads. It's like anything else, it's whatever you make it, whereever you skate, whatever you're into, whatever your ambitions are for it, is what you're going to get in the end.

AU: Any advice for the kids?

TA: Straight old classic advice, just keep on skating man, do your thing, just have fun, that's it, that's all, don't worry about the bullshit.

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PHOTO SOURCE: Malcolm Hassin

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